



PASUGO

OCTOBER 2018

GOD'S MESSAGE

The Magazine of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ)

A divine institution





The ministers, ministerial workers, and lay volunteer workers in the Department of Evangelism join our brethren in the Church Of Christ throughout the world in giving praises and thanks to our Almighty God for another year that has been added to the life of our beloved Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo. With one voice, we pray that God continue to bestow on him long life and the best of health, wisdom, and power as he leads the Church to further victories until we attain the everlasting life we are all yearning for.



INSPIRED. Brethren in Toronto, Canada after the dedication of their house of worship (Story on page 12).

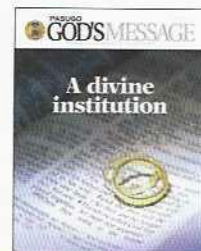
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of a married couple



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Why is live-in relationship not allowed in the Iglesia Ni Cristo?

Today, many people consent to live-in arrangements, that is, living with and having a sexual relationship with someone, but not married (*Macmillan English Dictionary*, p. 837). This has now become a common practice in many parts of the world. However, ever since God created the first man and first woman, sexual relationship should have been confined or limited to married couples (Gen. 1:28; 2:18-24).

Therefore, any sexual relationship outside marriage is considered as adultery or fornication. Apostle Paul explicitly taught against fornication which live-in partners engage in: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. **Neither fornicators**, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor

homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners **will inherit the kingdom of God**" (I Cor. 6:9-10 New King James Version, emphasis ours). Cohabitation or live-in, then, is definitely against God's law. Thus, members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) are prohibited to do such. The apostle even attests that fornicators will not inherit God's kingdom.

Aware of the commandments of God, the members of the Church Of Christ will never succumb to the continuing decline of moral values of the people of this world for the Bible says, "Do not follow the majority when they do wrong or when they give testimony that perverts justice" (Exo. 23:2 Today's English Version). ●

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'Let no one separate'

VIEWS ON MARRIAGE vary from person to person, culture to culture, and religion to religion. For members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), marriage is, and will always be, a sacred institution because the Bible teaches that it is God Who ordained it.

God instituted marriage when He gave His commandments and blessings to the first man and the first woman He created before they began their life together (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-22). In the sight of God, they are no longer two but one (Gen. 2:24). Because God is the One Who joined them, the husband and his wife should remain married to each other. This is what Jesus Christ Himself affirmed when He said, "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (Mark 10:9 New International Version).

God's commandments to the married couple are the tie that binds them together as one (Rom. 7:2). Thus, marriage is sacred and it ought to be respected by everyone (Heb. 13:4). These biblical teachings about marriage should guide married couples and should be seriously considered by those who are planning to get into married life.

Marriage should not be entered into lightly. It should be the result of serious reflections and devotional prayers, with the advice and guidance of the parents also taken into consideration. Moreover, a marriage certificate is not just a piece of paper. It is a legal document wherein by affixing their signatures, the husband and the wife express their commitment to a relationship that only the death of either of them can dissolve.

Since marriage is a lifelong commitment, it ought to be nurtured and preserved by husbands and wives in order for them to achieve the happiness that God intended it to bring them. They should do this by fulfilling the commandments and instructions of God, written in the Bible, that bind them together.

The Bible teaches that the husband and wife should love each other (Eph. 5:25, 28-29; Titus 2:4). Those who truly love their spouse would never engage in another relationship with other people. The husband should live with his wife, be understanding and respectful, and not

harsh to her (I Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:19). The wife, meanwhile, should submit to and respect her husband (Eph. 5:22, 33).

Both of them should live a righteous life and keep away from evil (Prov. 2:16-20). And if God had blessed them with children, they should provide for and supervise their household (I Tim. 5:8; Prov. 31:27).

For Church Of Christ members, the union of the married couple has a more profound meaning. According to Apostle Paul, the relationship of Christ with His Church is likened to that of a husband with his wife (Eph. 5:31-32). The apostle said that Christ was betrothed to the Church (II Cor. 11:2; 1:1); he referred to the Church as the "bride" of Christ (II Cor. 11:2 Revised Standard Version). Because of this, Christ and His Church share an "intimate relationship" with one another (I Cor. 1:9 The Voice). This is one of the reasons the Church Of Christ upholds the biblical teaching: what God has joined together, let no one separate.

The Church that Apostle Paul was referring to is the Church Of Christ (Acts 20:28 Lamsa Translation).

Because the Church Of Christ is already betrothed to Christ, He will not have any relationship with people who do not belong to His Church. To say that Christ does so would amount to accusing Him of adultery—which is absolutely wrong and blasphemous.

Like a good husband, Christ is faithful to the Church Of Christ because this is the Church that He loves and cares for. This is also the Church that He will save (Eph. 5:23, 25, 29).

The proof of Christ's caring and nurturing for the Church is that the Church Of Christ continues to grow in number and spiritual life despite these trying times.

Thus, Church Of Christ members are also expected to remain faithful to Christ at all times. We should do this by faithfully obeying God's teachings that Christ taught and by remaining in His Church as steadfast and active members. ●

Bienvenido A. Santiago Jr.
Associate Editor

Church Bulletin



NEU-General Santos City launches Weekend Family Market

In cooperation with the Christian Society for the Deaf (CSD), the New Era University-General Santos City launched the Weekend Family Market on September 25, 2018 at the school's campus.

Brother Franklin T. Bunag, minister of the gospel, said, "The Weekend Family Market gives opportunity to both entrepreneurs and shoppers. On the part of both dealer and trader, seller and buyer, they can think of many ways on how their business will progress. This kind of experience will bolster their livelihood."

CSD delegates from 22 ecclesiastical districts of Mindanao arrived in Cotabato South Ecclesiastical District to



participate in the activity. The program of the event included musical presentations, poetry reading, games, and giving of lanyards and sign language guides. (R.J. Monton)



Aiding tornado-hit areas in Quebec

On October 6, 2018, an Aid for Humanity event was conducted in Gatineau, Quebec by members of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) from the Local Congregation of Ottawa, Ecclesiastical District of Canada II.

Despite the cold weather, the brethren distributed bags of winter care packages to the victims of the recent tornado. The distribution was led by Brother Ramfel Serreno, minister of the gospel.

Six consecutive tornadoes hit the region recently, tearing down homes and public structures. The strongest of the six touched down in the small community of Dunrobin in the west end of Ottawa, then crossed the Ottawa River and hit the Mont-Bleu neighborhood in Gatineau, Quebec affecting hundreds of residents. (M. Milan)





Free medical and dental services given in Polilio, Quezon

A *Lingap sa Mamamayan* (Aid for Humanity) was held on September 21, 2018 at the island of Polilio in the Ecclesiastical District of Quezon North. Free medical and dental services were given to residents. They also received free relief packages from the voluntary donations of the brethren in the Church.

The event was held in a covered court that was divided into

several booths. Among those who came were the elderly who were given maintenance medication that have been prescribed to them. The children were also given free medicine and multivitamins.

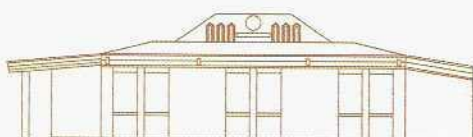
The Aid for Humanity project is a continuing initiative of the members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* under the leadership of the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, to extend a helping hand to needy communities in different parts of the world. (C. Lubay and M.J. Montes)

Fun day held for choir members

On August 28, 2018, choir members in the Local Congregation of Butuan City, Agusan Del Norte Ecclesiastical District held a choir fun day at a beach resort in the town of Nasipit.

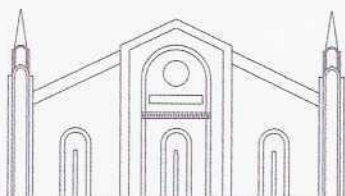
The brethren were led by their district supervising minister, Brother Tito Maghuyop. The program was filled with interactional activities that included several fun games which were eagerly participated in by everyone who attended. (J. Espadera)





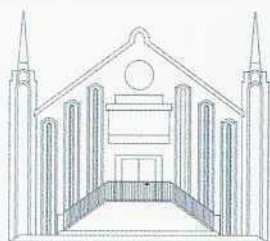
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

September 1, 2018



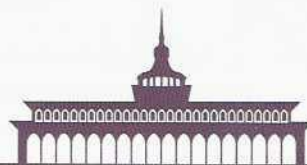
TORONTO, CANADA

September 22, 2018



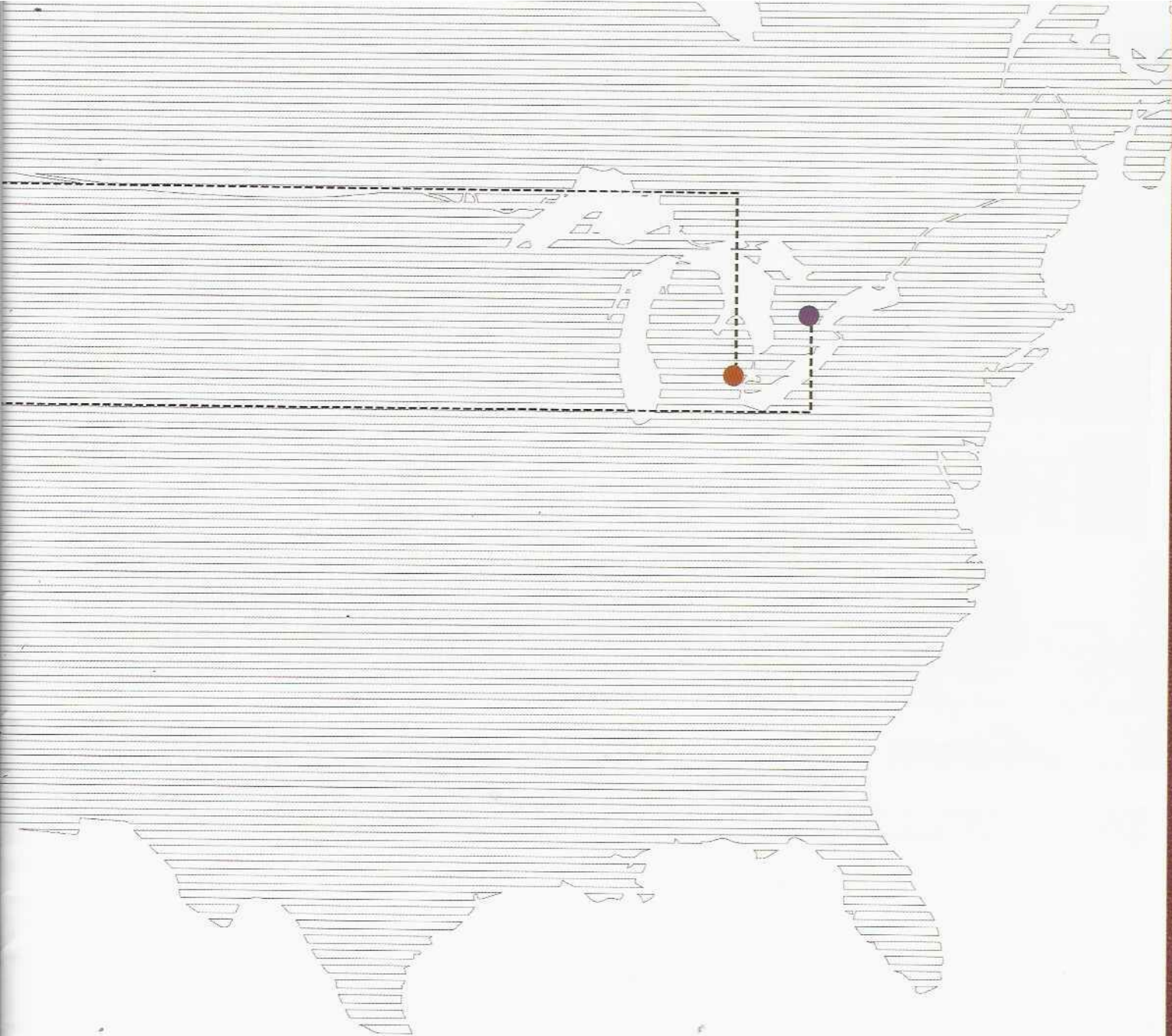
CALGARY, CANADA

September 29, 2018



EXECUTIVE NEWS

Our **Constant**
Dedication
to *Worshiping God*



AFTER LEADING THE DEDICATION OF THREE HOUSES OF WORSHIP in California, Nevada, and Texas, respectively, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), continues his pastoral visitation to the U.S. and Canada. This series of pastoral visits includes leading the dedication to God of three more houses of worship.

Detroit

M I C H I G A N

IMAGINE HAVING A ROUGH DAY—struggling at the workplace, having a family problem, nearly failing a class, not feeling well because of illness—what does one do next? How does a person cope with such situation? For members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), whether it is in joy or in adversity, they are drawn to the house of worship to pray to the Lord God. Whether it is a worship service day or not, especially in time of need, these members seek out this holy place of prayer because they know the Lord God awaits them.

“The house of worship is of utmost importance for me. It is a place where I connect with God. It should be cared for and respected above all other edifices,” said Brother Jeff Wild, a member of the Local Congregation of Detroit. During a sacred occasion on September 1, 2018, this congregation received another blessing from God—the dedication of its newly renovated house of worship. The gathering was officiated by the Executive Minister of the Church Of Christ, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo. The brethren who attended were not just from Detroit but also from across





Before renovation

the Ecclesiastical District of Northern Midwest.

Brother Jeff, together with many other brethren from Detroit and other congregations in the district, helped in the renovation project. He remembered how good it felt to invest time and effort in volunteering to help in the renovation. "I'm happy to know that many brethren feel the same way. Even though we might be tired after a long day at work, we did not feel satisfied until we contributed to help to push us closer to our

goal of having this house of worship dedicated to God," he said.

The brethren in Northern Midwest showed their unity in this endeavor by voluntarily donating construction materials, while others offered their time, energy, and skills in renovating the house of worship. Such love inspired more brethren to offer their help as the project went on. Some brethren came from the offsprings of the Local Congregation of Detroit, such as Grand Rapids, and Sterling Heights in Michigan;

Cleveland, Ohio; while others came from congregations farther away, such as Chicago and Bloomingdale in Illinois.

Church Of Christ members faithfully believe that the house of worship is important because this is the place where they gather to worship God. "Before I became a member, I did not understand the value of the house of worship and the important role that it plays in our connection with God," said Brother Jeff. "Before I became a member in the Church Of Christ,

I did not feel the presence of the Holy Spirit elsewhere."

As mentioned in the preaching of Brother Eduardo Manalo, while some people gravitate towards what they just wanted to hear, the Church Of Christ teaches solely what is written in the Bible. Brother Monty Oliver, who had served as a Navy officer, was called into the Church by means of a fellow Navy officer. When asked about the trials in life, he answered, "I have been in the Church for more than 40 years and through that time everything from family, friends, and work have tested my resolve, even recently, when I was diagnosed with cancer. None of it will shake

my faith. As long as I serve the Lord, I know where I will end up when this life ends."

Even the youth members of the Church continue to fight for their faith as they face challenges each day. One example is Brother Ray Puyat, a 21-year-old choir member and Children's Worship Service chairperson. He said, "There was a situation where I had to decide and choose between my faith and my education. It was final exam season at my university, and coincidentally, it was also the time for the Year-end Thanksgiving preparation at the local congregation. I was shocked to find out that one of the exam schedules fell on the same day of the





Musical program after the worship service

choir's final practice for the Year-End Thanksgiving."

Like what the Church Administration always teach members of the Church Of Christ, Brother Ray entrusted his situation to our Almighty God through prayer. "I went and sought a quiet corner at the chapel and just prayed to God for a solution to my dilemma." God answered his prayers. His professor approved his request to take the exam on a different day. He expressed, "If we wholly put our trust in the Almighty God and never allow our faith to be dampened, all things will fall into place and God Himself will show the right path to take."

Even in the earlier years of the Local Congregation of Detroit, the brethren had always expressed their zeal in their services to God. From the congregation's humble beginnings as a committee prayer group in the fall of 1974, their number had increased within the decade. By 1984, with God's mercy, they became a full-fledged local congregation and had their first house of worship. The brethren in Detroit, who were originally registered in the Local Congregation of Chicago, grew in number and, more importantly, in faith.

A congregation forging ahead with strong conviction,

surging forward along with the growth of the Church Of Christ, the Detroit Congregation will continue safeguarding the divine truth taught to them within the house of worship—the place they will always care for and love. 🙏

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Before renovation

BEING ONE of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, Toronto comprises over 230 different nationalities, with more than half of its population born outside of Canada, according to the BBC Radio 4's statistics seconded by the United Nations

Development Programme. Being Ontario's capital city, Toronto has multiculturalism as its trademark to the world. However, if there's one culture that Toronto residents share, it would have to be the work culture. Almost everyone in Toronto spends much time in working in order to pay the bills because of the high cost of living that drives up mortgages and rent. But the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) members in Toronto, though hardworking, uphold the true Christian culture that matters above all else. They value their Church membership as their true wealth.

Among them is Brother Danilo Constantino, a dea-

con and area leader in the Local Congregation of Toronto, Ecclesiastical District of Canada II. He recalled how it was to be an immigrant when he first came to Canada five years ago: "I thought when I came here, it would be easy to get a job and start a new life." On the contrary, he found it difficult to look for a job.

But problems do not end with having found a job. Once employed, time becomes people's major concern. Brother Danilo shared his experience about the demanding work culture in Toronto. He stated, "In Toronto, work will eat up all your time. People would be pushed to their limits that

Toronto

C A N A D A

some would be tempted not to allot time for worshipping God." There are times when having one job is not enough to make ends meet. Some brethren in Toronto have to work at two or three jobs just to support themselves and their families. Brother James Turingan, a KADIWA member and choir member in the said local congregation, shared the effects of working full-time and holding extra jobs: "At the end of a work day, you would be tired. Extremely tired that you find it hard to do anything more." But he prioritizes his Church responsibilities over his personal well-being. During

the renovation of their local congregation's chapel, Brother James spent more time to help with the renovations. He was happy to do so, saying, "That's okay because I've already dedicated myself to helping in the chapel renovation and in the preparation for the pastoral visit. That is more important. God will take care of me."

Even though the Canadian work culture proves to be physically and mentally draining, Sister Maureen Esperanza, KADIWA local congregation president and choir member, makes sure that her work schedule does not conflict with her

services to the Almighty God. She said, "I actually have two jobs. Several of my co-workers know that I am active in the Church. My employer knows how important my involvement in the Church is to me."

Many more brethren share the same conviction. Sister Maria Talento, a choir member and Children's Worship Service assistant choir leader, passed up lucrative job offers because accepting them would hinder her to perform her Church duties. She asked herself then, "If I accept these jobs, how am I going to perform? Is that a real blessing?"



Besides, she said, "God has His ways of providing for me."

Despite all of these, Church Of Christ members are able to deal with, face, and respond to all these life challenges. From the Holy Scriptures, the Executive Minister teaches the brethren how they can fight for their faith and hold on to their membership. In his homily in the worship service he officiated at in the Local Congregation of Toronto on September 22, 2018, he reminded the brethren to use God's righteousness, with fervent prayers, to fight the good fight of faith.

During that sacred gathering, the local congregation's newly renovated house of worship was dedicated to God. Church Of Christ members in the Local Congregation of

Toronto have taken to heart the words of God they received from the Executive Minister.

It is during worship services when the brethren receive God's words and the strength they need to fight the good fight of faith. Sister Maureen said, "In the worship services, I would pray to God and feel surrounded by peace which leads to me feeling comforted. By listening carefully to the lesson, I hear what I need to get me through whatever is challenging me."

Brother James continues to trust in the Almighty God through prayer: "I hold personal devotional prayers and do my best in serving God. I know that He will take care of me." In times of grief, Sister Maria similarly finds comfort in praying to God:

"I always ask for the Father's help. I cannot do anything without prayer." Having overcome trials in life, Brother Danilo learned that "part of being an *Iglesia Ni Cristo* member is that God tests you in every way, every time. We need to go through these trials and tests to prove that we have true faith. We really need to stand our ground."

With this firm and strong conviction, and continuous reflection on how God has blessed them, Church members are all the more inspired to share the true faith and keep aflame the fire of the Holy Spirit within them. Brother Jack Batoon, a deacon and the Light of Salvation president, continues to be inspired in letting people know about the true Christian faith.





He said, "I will always be a proud member of the Church Of Christ. I know that being its member is the only way to attain salvation and that it is God's commandment to share our faith." Being one of those who were called into the true Church Of Christ—having firm hope of receiving salvation—Brother Fernando Plamenco emphasized the value of sharing the faith: "We should really exert effort in letting people know that this is the true Church. We should be brave and courageous. Let us go out there and tell them that this is the true Church!" He is the congregation's head deacon.

Through the words of God taught by the Church Administration and the spiritual blessings that the brethren received during the pastoral visit, they were all the more inspired to fight for their faith. Whether blessings or more trials lie ahead of them, Church Of Christ members hold on to what God has promised them. Brother James, while

looking for a job and waiting for his prayers to be answered, said, "I pray to God for Him to give me a career that is fit for me. Whatever it is that He chooses to give me, I will accept. I will always prioritize my duty as an *Iglesia Ni Cristo* member rather than choose anything that the world offers but would hinder my performance of my duty."

Toronto is indeed a city of hardworking and diligent people to the point of possibly overworking themselves to earn a financially-secured life. However, Church Of Christ members understand that despite the stress from work and the hardships they experience in life, their true wealth is their divine election and their true work is their holy work for the Almighty God. As Brother Danilo put it, "We have nothing to worry about. We are God's children, after all." 🙏

By Angela Milano and April Masongsong
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Before renovation

JUST ABOUT 80 kilometers east of the Canadian Rocky Mountains is Calgary, Alberta, a city surrounded by an area of profound beauty and a rich natural environment. Calgary has been ranked the fifth most livable city in the world. However, Calgary is also known for having harsh and unexpected weather conditions.

"We had to battle deadly winds, blizzards, freezing rain, and dangerous roads,"

expressed Brother Virgilio Zoreta, 75 years old. He shared an instance when they were traveling through the harsh weather to attend the worship service: "One time, my wife and I actually ended up in a ditch. This ditch was deep enough that we needed help to get off of it. The ditch separated the highways, so it was really scary. Through God's grace, we were still able to attend the worship service." Their family, at that time, lived in Medicine Hat.

Calgary

CANADA

They had to drive three hours, if there was no snow, to the nearest place of worship, the Calgary Local Congregation, Ecclesiastical District of Canada.

Aside from the harsh weather conditions, Calgarians also face the typical challenges in life, especially concerning livelihood. "A time came when my job contract ended. I was laid off and didn't have work for more than six months," shared Sister Juliet Manuel, a choir member and Children's Worship Service (CWS) teacher from the Local Congregation of Forest Heights. The thought of losing

one's means of living can truly be worrisome, especially if that person is one of the main contributors to the family's needs. "I had to pay off the house bills and help my parents with the other needs. There came a time when all my savings have been used up," she added.

But this did not dampen her faith and hope in God. "I continued with my devotional prayers. After more than six months of searching for job openings, I found work with a three-month contract," Sister Juliet stated. "I didn't stop having my devotional prayers.

And before my contract ended, I was hired as a permanent employee," she continued.

Amidst the struggles of everyday living, people do their best to find peace and solace in their life. However, no matter what they do, the one they find is still short of the true peace—finding only peace that is fleeting and fragile. "But members in the Church Of Christ have found the true peace because the Bible teaches that in the Church, we are at peace with God," said Brother Justin Alisasis, a choir member and CWS Teacher from Calgary.



"No matter where a person goes, no matter what he attains, he will always encounter problems," expressed Sister Rachelle Anne Ibañez, a choir member and CWS Teacher from East Vancouver, Ecclesiastical District of Canada I. She added, "Even if one becomes extremely wealthy or influential, he still cannot avoid facing distress. True peace and happiness comes from God."

Being a convert in the Church, finding true peace in the Church Of Christ is manifest in the life of Sister Marphiene Leung, a choir member and a CWS officer from the Local Congregation of Calgary North. She said, "Before joining the Church Of Christ, I always felt something missing in my life and I was not in the right path. I did not know the purpose of living. One day, I asked myself why I feel so empty, lost, and useless. Then, becoming a Church member answered my questions. My life right now has

a purpose and direction. I'm in the right path now and I know my purpose in life, which is to serve and glorify God."

Finding true peace with God was what the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, taught during the dedication of the chapel of the Local Congregation of Calgary, Ecclesiastical District of Canada V on September 29, 2018. Hundreds of brethren, not only from Calgary but also from various parts of Canada, gathered to attend the special worship service.

"It is useless to focus our time solely on living comfortably in this world," conveyed Sister Gianna Mariano, a choir member, a CWS officer, and a KADIWA officer from Calgary. "We should instead focus on our Church membership and how we can truly attain peace with God and salvation on the day of the Lord's return," she added. Knowing what should be her

top priority, she said, "School, work, family, friends, and others may play a significant role in our daily life. But as members of the Church Of Christ, we should prioritize God over everything else. I've placed my full trust in God because I am confident and certain that He will lead me to the right path because He knows what's best for me."



"My wife and I found stable jobs here in Canada," mentioned Brother Dean De Jesus, a head deacon from Victoria Local Congregation, Ecclesiastical District of Canada II, who, after attending the chapel dedication in Toronto, traveled all the way to Calgary with his wife to attend another house of worship dedication. Brother Dean shared how he prioritizes the Church over his career: "Our work schedule always revolves around the times and days we could always perform our Church duties and attend worship services." He added, "Our Church membership and faith in God keeps us going. It is a great blessing to experience inner peace despite the many challenges in life."

Sister Juliet stated, "Looking back at our experiences, our family has been through a lot of trials. We've walked through the toughest times of life." However, she expressed how she and her family overcame life's trials: "Because we are members of the Church Of Christ, God always blesses us with the things that we need to survive life's challenges. Most of all, He promised us everlasting life come the Day of Judgment."

Brother Felicito B. Corong III, an organist in the Local Congregation of Calgary, explained why receiving salvation on Judgment Day far outweighs the things of this world: "Everything here in this world is temporary. Even if I lived for a hundred years here on earth full of trials and pain, it is infinitely small compared to the eternal joy and blessings we will receive in heaven." This is why the brethren value and cherish their membership in the Church. Brother Justin affirmed, "Because I'm already part of the true Church, I will never risk my membership because only here can we find the true peace. It is only here where we can receive the promised salvation. There is nothing more important than our membership in the Church Of Christ. We should always place our divine election and our services to God first because this is our purpose in life." 🕊

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Level up

IN THE
FACE OF TRIALS

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL of the United States of America—Washington, District of Columbia—has most of the nation's monuments and federal buildings such as the U.S. Capitol Building and the White House, the home and office of the President of the United States. Just about three miles north of the White House is a house of worship of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ).

"When I moved to Washington D.C. in 2014, my purpose was to seek career independence and advancement," said Sister Christine Ortega who made plans to make D.C. her new home to pursue a career in government or related organizations. Soon enough, she was blessed with a government contractor position and made the transition.



However, she immediately discovered the difficulty in balancing her duties and the demanding schedule of her job. "Even though I am only 30 minutes away from the Washington, D.C. Congregation's house of worship, it can be difficult to get there because of all the heavy traffic in the city." To make matters worse, her previous work environment was not helpful towards performing her duties, but, she said, "I never gave up on my duties. I kept praying to be assigned to a different job post."

With God's grace, Sister Christine found another job in the same career field that offered more flexibility. "I'm still a contractor but in a promoted position which allowed me to have so much more time

and flexibility to help with the Church activities and functions in the Washington, D.C. Congregation," she said. Sister Christine was not only able to perform her duties better, she was also able to level up in her Church membership by helping in organizing events in the local congregation, the host of many activities as the center of the Ecclesiastical District of Mid Atlantic I. "From INC Giving events, to Christian Family Organizations projects, choir duties, INCRadio duties, and being a Children's Worship Service officer, I've learned so much about what it means to be a good leader—to know how to follow instructions, push through and adapt when problems arise, and act quickly whenever there are vast changes," she said.

Like Sister Christine, there are many brethren who moved to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Brother Teodorico Bidavid Jr., a member of the Society of Communicators and Networkers International (SCAN), initially came to Washington, D.C. along with his wife and son to help take care of his mother-in-law.

Housing costs in Washington, D.C. proper are among the highest in the nation and so, many choose to live in more economical neighboring cities that are just a drive away from the city. Yet, this is not the case for Brother Teodorico. "First of all, I don't have a car suitable for travel from afar to the house of worship," he said.

Brother Teodorico moved to a place close to the house of worship of the Washington





D.C. Congregation and joined it seven years ago when it still held its worship services at its previous house of worship. "I decided with my family to live close to it so that whatever may happen, we will not miss the worship service which is our primary duty," he said.

Even when the worship services were already held in the new house of worship on 16th Street NW, Brother Teodorico stayed true to his commitment. His family moved to an apartment closer to the newer house of worship. He works a regular day job and has another job on the side. He said that "earning a

living every day to make both ends meet is tough. Setting priorities is another form of hardship, especially in this time of economic difficulties." Whenever his work conflicts with his Church duties, he chooses to perform his duty first, saying, "I know my priorities, it's either I reschedule or lose the opportunity to earn. I believe that God will not forsake us when we, His children, put Him first in our life."

Having firm faith in what God can do, Brother Teodorico treasures living near the chapel. He expressed, "Whenever I have problems and worries in life, the

first thing I remember is to go to the house of worship, kneel down, and pray. I feel calm and at peace after that."

One of the pioneering members of the Local Congregation of Washington, D.C., Brother Geoffrey Nolasco also experienced the ups and downs of everyday living and working in a developed and affluent country. He recalls, "Back in 2001, after avoiding two layoffs from my job then, the September 11 terrorist attack happened which made the market crash and I was not able to avoid another wave of lay off from my work." In mid-November that year, he was

out of work but was able to find a temporary job in December. However, having to travel as required by his job, there came a time when it became difficult for him to perform his duty as a choir member. But he chose to prioritize his Church duty over work. "This eventually led me to losing my job before the end of December," he said.

The challenges did not stop there. "My wife was confined in the hospital for almost a month and had our twins in February. However, they were not due until May. My children stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for about two months," said Brother Geoffrey. In addition to that, one of his children got sick and had to be taken to another hospital with a specialist that could help.

In spite of the trials faced by Brother Geoffrey, he never felt bitterness in his heart and never forsook his duties: "Throughout those trying times, I continued to perform my Church duties. My wife and I never missed any worship service and we continued to hold our devotional prayers." Their prayers were answered, indeed. Two months after, his children were discharged from the hospital. And in October 2002, Brother Geoffrey was blessed with a job. Today, he reflects: "I view these hardships as a life lesson, tests to my faith, and a blessing at the same time—a life lesson, because it taught me to be strong emotionally and spiritually."

In Brother Geoffrey's 27 years of membership, he

considers himself very blessed to have held many offices in the Church, starting as a choir member, then assistant choir leader, *Buklod* president, INC Giving coordinator, deacon, area leader, and now a head deacon. Reflecting on how they overcame the trials they faced, he said, "16 years later, I'm in the same job I found in October 2002, my children are now healthy 16-year-olds performing their Church duties, I'm able to perform my duties as a head deacon."

Like Brother Geoffrey, the members and officers of the Local Congregation of Washington, D.C. became even more determined to level up in their membership as taught during the pastoral visit of the Executive Minister on September 8, 2018.

Throughout the 104 years of the Church Of Christ's establishment in the Philippines and 50 years in the West, the Church has experienced countless persecutions and trials as an organization and at the individual level of each member. As the Church continues to grow, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, with a deep level of love and concern, urged the brethren to do the same with their faith, especially in upholding their duties. He reminded the brethren that no matter what God's people go through in life, He will always keep His promises. He will never push them beyond their limits and He will never abandon those whom He has called in His Church. ☺



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JOHNSONVILLE, CONNECTICUT, U.S.A.

All *is* POSSIBLE *with* God

PASTORAL VISITATION

SEPTEMBER 16, 2018



AT FOUR O'CLOCK in the morning, Brother Lamont Daniels had already woken up and prepared all the things he needed before heading out from his Connecticut hotel room miles away from his home in Blackwood, New Jersey. When asked to describe a typical Saturday, Brother Lamont casually shared this fact: "For the last two and a half years, I have been going through dialysis for three hours and 45 minutes each session."

At the age of 25, Brother Lamont has a *focal segmental glomerulosclerosis*, a condition that causes some parts of the kidney's filtering units to become scarred. Because of this, Brother Lamont faces end-stage renal disease (ESRD) or end-stage kidney disease and is in dire need of a kidney transplant, but one would never know this behind his bright smile and warm disposition.

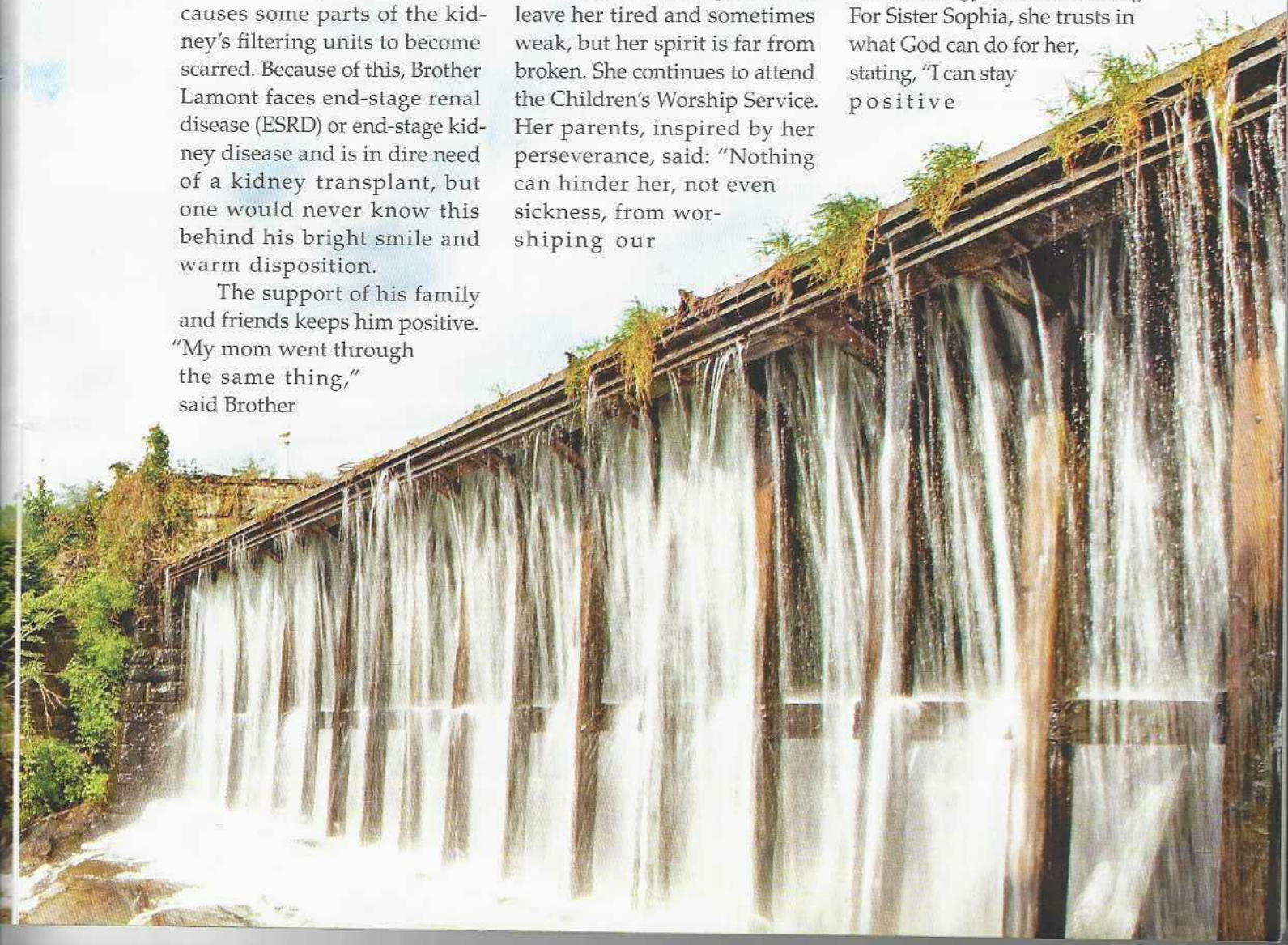
The support of his family and friends keeps him positive. "My mom went through the same thing," said Brother

Lamont. "So she guides me and understands what I am going through. Along with her support is the support of the brethren in the Church; they are like family to me and they always encourage me. They are a huge help."

Like Brother Lamont, 8-year-old Sister Sophia Espiritu of Holbrook, New York also has a serious medical condition. Earlier this year she was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor, requiring her to undergo chemotherapy at least five days a week every three weeks. The treatments Sister Sophia undergoes often leave her tired and sometimes weak, but her spirit is far from broken. She continues to attend the Children's Worship Service. Her parents, inspired by her perseverance, said: "Nothing can hinder her, not even sickness, from worshipping our

Almighty God. It gives us the peace of mind and assurance that she will remain in her service to God even when we are no longer there to guide her."

Brother Lamont's and Sister Sophia's conditions place so many limitations on their lives and the types of activities that they can be involved in. As members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), however, they are able to see the positive side of their situations. Brother Lamont expressed, "For me, most of the time, I feel like I am not sick. I'm able to do my daily routine. I believe God gives me the energy to remain strong." For Sister Sophia, she trusts in what God can do for her, stating, "I can stay positive



because I know I will be okay and God can heal me."

Though there are restrictions they must follow to maintain their health, there is one occasion they know they must never miss for their spiritual well-being—the worship service. Ever since he was introduced to the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* in 2011, Brother Lamont has always prioritized the worship service. He stated, "It is in the worship service where I feel stronger and it is when my faith is strengthened."

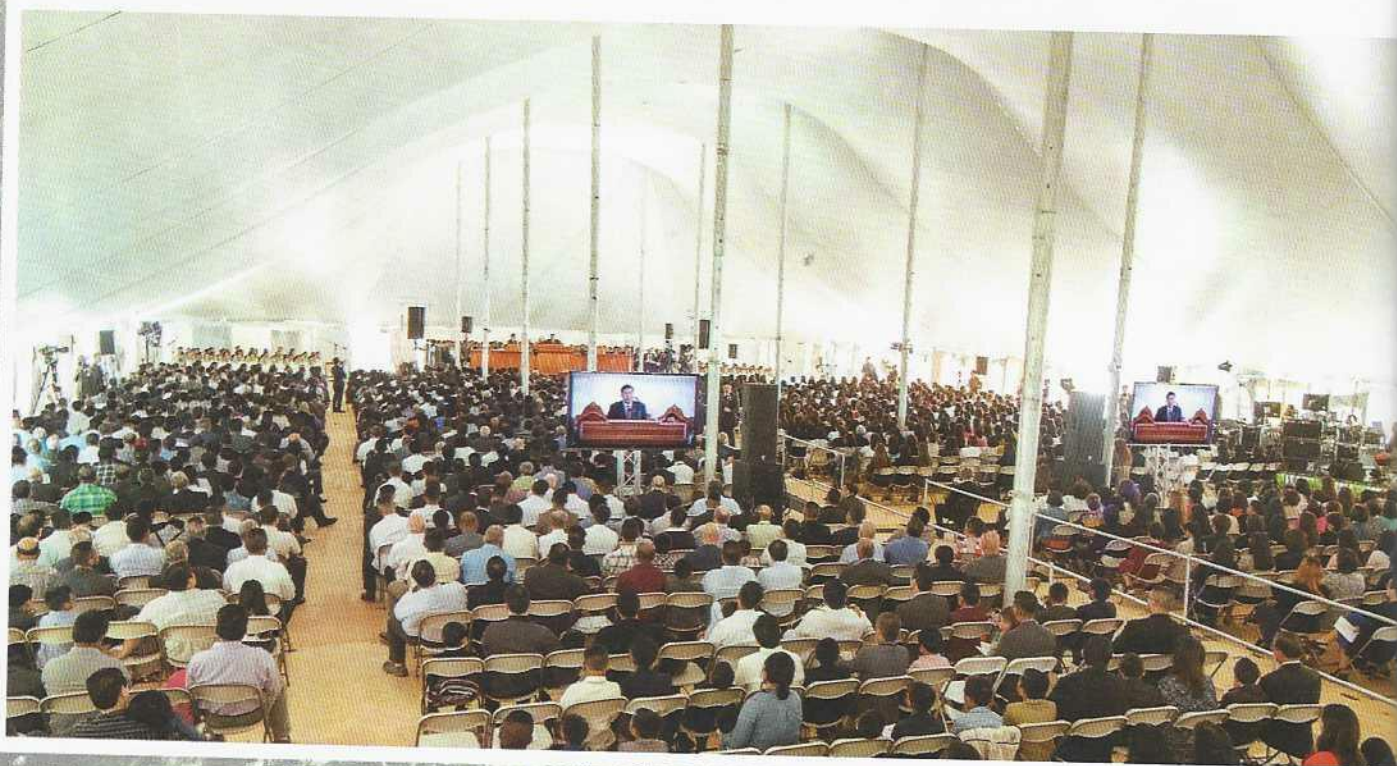
Knowing how much they value the worship service, it is no surprise that Brother Lamont and Sister Sophia made the necessary sacrifices to be part of the worship service led by the Executive Minister,

Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, in Johnsonville, Connecticut on September 16, 2018. It was the inaugural worship service of the Johnsonville Group Worship Service, Ecclesiastical District of Northeastern Seaboard.

Juggling a dialysis schedule, Brother Lamont made all the necessary changes he possibly could, not only to attend this occasion, but also to perform his duty as choir member. He stated, "I am currently undergoing dialysis in South New Jersey where I live. But I asked permission from my doctor if I could do dialysis here in Connecticut. I have dialysis Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. I attended dialysis Thursday morning in New Jersey and afterwards, I headed to Connecticut for choir

practice. Then, Friday at 6:30 in the morning, I attended dialysis in a facility near the hotel I was staying at and went straight to choir practice right after. It is not my usual schedule, but I had to change it for this week because the worship service was Saturday morning."

For Sister Sophia, days before the pastoral visit, she was admitted to the hospital due to a high-grade fever but left as early as Friday afternoon, since she and her family would have to journey to Connecticut, about 150 miles from their home. Her mother, Sister Melody Espiritu, recalled: "She went to chemotherapy everyday even though she had a fever. Every night, Sister Sophia conducted her own devotional prayer and we



also prayed as a family so we would not be hindered from attending the worship service." The day before the pastoral visit, Sister Sophia received medical clearance from her doctors and was fever-free.

In the lesson that was preached during the pastoral visitation in Johnsonville, Connecticut, Brother Eduardo Manalo reminded the brethren that with God's almighty power, all things are always possible for the members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. So the word "impossible" should not be in their vocabulary.

Before concluding the worship service, the Executive Minister made a call to the youth of the Church, encouraging them to remain firm in

their calling and to value their divine election—something that Brother Xavier Allen from the Local Congregation of Bellmore, New York, took to heart: "Brother Eduardo Manalo reminded us to remain in the Church Of Christ because this is the only Church that will be saved. When life gets hard and when things seem impossible, what I have to do is pray and everything will be possible because we have the true God."

Brother Lamont draws inspiration from the worship service led by the Executive Minister. He said, "I am thankful that the Executive Minister was able to visit us. Through his visit we were reminded of what matters most, which is

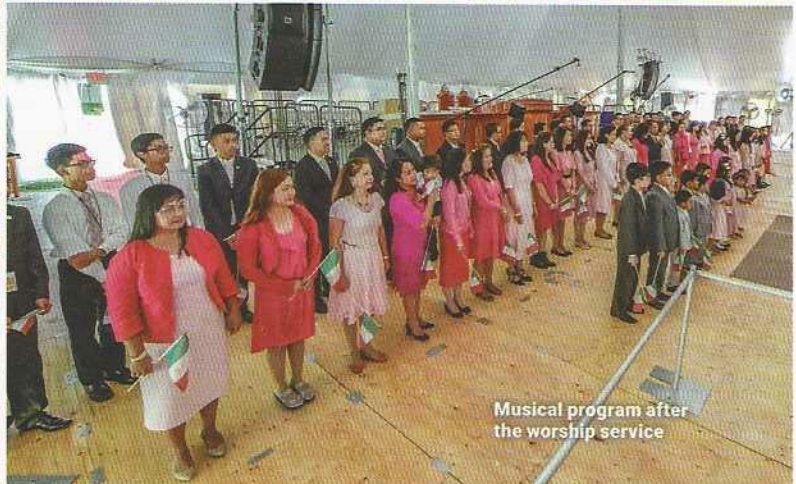
our duties and our membership in the Church Of Christ. We were all the more inspired to fight for our faith. No matter what the circumstances are, we will value our God-given election."

With this conviction, members of the Church prove that even when faced with the greatest of challenges, all is possible with God. With faith, we will surely see His promises fulfilled. ☺

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Musical program after the worship service

HELPING PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN GOD COMPLETELY

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS AND MINISTERIAL WORKERS
WASHINGTON, D.C. | U.S.A. | SEPTEMBER 3, 2018

BY DEXTER MANGLICMOT

RECENTLY, Washington, D.C. was the place for another important and historic occasion for the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ)—the International Conference of Ministers and Ministerial Workers led by Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister of the Church.

The conference held on September 3, 2018 had ministers and ministerial workers from across the United States and Canada gather in the house of worship in Washington, D.C. The Church's international conferences of ministers and ministerial workers are usually broadcast from the Central Temple of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* in Quezon City, Philippines. This marks the first time that it was held and broadcast from the U.S. national capital and the third time outside the Philippines, the other two being

in Sacramento, California and in London, England.

Ministers from 17 ecclesiastical districts in the United States and Canada attended the occasion. Brother Mathusalem V. Pareja started the occasion by greeting the ministers who were in attendance not only in Washington, D.C. but also those in different parts of the world who witnessed the gathering through live video conferencing. Afterwards, the oath-taking of ministers who were entrusted with new or additional responsibilities was led by Brother Glicerio B. Santos Jr., followed by a prayer led by Brother Matthew T. Capistrano.

In his homily, the Executive Minister emphasized that ministers, being true servants of the Lord God, were sent to help people to believe God and understand the true message about Christ completely (Titus



1:1-3). He also emphasized the importance of carefully following the truth that we have heard so as not to drift away from it (Heb. 2:1) and the paramount importance of having self-control and sincere love for others (Titus 2:2).

Brother Matthew, the district supervising minister of the host district, the Ecclesiastical District of Mid Atlantic I,



commented on the atmosphere at the conference: "We were filled with joy. Our faith was strengthened once again. Even though ministers traveled from various parts of the country—as far as Alaska—we all eagerly anticipated hearing the words of our Almighty God through our beloved Executive Minister." He added, "We felt the encouragement, the inspiration. And not only that, there were 37 ministers who took their oath for other responsibilities within the various districts of the United States and Canada."

Brother Zane Dizon was among the ministers who took oath during the conference. The event all the more inspired him to dedicate himself to the task that he has been given. "It was a very inspiring and blessed experience to be in the presence of my fellow ministers and most of all to hear once again the preaching of our Executive Minister," Brother Zane said. "If one really wants to be a servant of God, he needs to follow Him completely, without reservation. Those in the holy ministry should constantly make self-evaluations to make sure that their purpose

**IF ONE REALLY WANTS TO BE A SERVANT OF GOD,
HE NEEDS TO FOLLOW HIM COMPLETELY,
WITHOUT RESERVATION**



is aligned with God's will, to please Him, deny one's self and bear all things for the sake of caring for His people."

The ministers and ministerial workers were not the only ones inspired by the occasion. Their respective wives were also in attendance. "Being newlywed, it was my first time to attend a ministers' conference. It is indeed a great blessing to be guided by the words of God through our beloved Executive Minister," said Sister May Ann Guerzon, who recently married newly ordained minister, Brother Bernard Guerzon.

Sister Rosalina Castellones, who has been a minister's wife for many years, explained the great value of the conference for ministers' wives. "Being in the ministry for 38 years now, we had our ups and downs. We're blessed to be able to attend this gathering because reminders and admonitions like what we received today strengthen our great hope for salvation," Sister Rosalina said.

After the homily, the gathering was concluded with a prayer led by Brother Pareja. Moved by the Executive Minister's exhortations, Brother Matthew

expressed gratitude to him for his pastoral visit: "We love you very much. We promise that we will always be united with you. We will continue to do our part as the Church reaps victories for the honor of our Almighty God." ☪

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Blessed are the pure in heart

By KENNETH A. OUANO

DO YOU CONSIDER yourself an emotional person? Can you say that most decisions in your life involve your feelings? Some experts say that emotions underlie the majority of stress we experience, influence our decisions, provide the motivation for our actions, and create the textures that determine our quality of life (www.heartmath.org). Joy, sadness, love, hate, composure, anger, among others, can greatly affect how a person decides, even in the simplest choices in his life. Drastic decisions that many people regret are often made during a period of depression or pressure.

Considering how busy many people have become in today's modern setting, their hearts can become anxious, confused or troubled. It is true that some learn from what their hearts experience. However, others become stressed and aggravated that, in the end, they give in to the temptations of this world. Others end up enraged and hateful, apathetic and insensitive, or even immoral and corrupt.

The kind of heart to have

What does the Bible say about the kind of heart that true Christians should have to avoid an unfortunate state in life? The Lord Jesus Christ taught: "Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8 New King James Version). Having

a pure heart leads to a good conscience and sincere faith—traits that God commands His servants to have (1 Tim. 1:5, 19 NKJV).

How can we identify a person who has a pure heart? The Bible teaches that one who has a pure heart leads a righteous way of life:

"Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Clean up your lives, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you people who can't make up your mind." (James 4:8 Contemporary English Version)

There is a great need for such cleansing because, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, the hearts of men contain many wicked things such as evil thoughts, immoralities, pride, foolishness, and the like (Mark 7:21–23 NKJV). Therefore, a person who has a pure heart can be identified by the quality of his actions—leaving sins behind and renewing his life.

God seeks the pure in heart

Claiming to have a pure heart is one thing and convincing God of this is another. People ought to realize that the Almighty God is omniscient—He is all-knowing. He knows the content of one's heart, thus, nothing can be hidden from Him and no one can deceive Him (Gal. 6:7; Heb. 4:13). God knows us better than we know ourselves. In fact,



**"Blessed are
the pure in heart,
For they shall
see God."**

Matthew 5:8
New King James
Version

He knows everything a person thinks before it is even spoken, as proven in Psalm 139:1-4, thus:

"O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether." (NKJV)

What then should remain in every true Christian's heart to convince God that it is pure? Apostle Paul taught:

"But thanks be to God! For though at one time you were slaves to sin, you have obeyed with all your heart the truths found in the teaching you received." (Rom. 6:17 Good News Bible)

Convincing God that one has a pure heart needs not just faith but also obedience. Those who aim to have a pure heart should firmly believe and fully obey all of God's commandments.

Who can keep the heart pure

However, a question lingers: Can someone's heart remain pure? The wise King Solomon said: "Guard your heart more than anything you treasure, for it is the source of all life" (Prov. 4:23 Revised English Bible). Why did Solomon say that the heart is the source of all life? In another rendition of the Bible, the same verse reads: "*Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life*" (Living Bible). Thus, one's heart remains pure if he carefully guards it.

Many experts write books and advise people on how to be careful of their emotions and how to guard their heart. However, Apostle Paul taught the best way to do this: "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7 NKJV).

Which is referred to as the peace of God which will guard our hearts? Apostle Paul continued teaching through his letters to the Christians, thus: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Col. 3:15 NKJV).

The peace of God which best guards the heart is also the same peace to which people are called in one body. What does this one body refer to? "And He is the head of the body, the church ..." (Col. 1:18 NKJV). Joining the Church headed by Christ is the way to attain the peace of God that best guards the heart. The name of the Church headed by Christ is the Church Of Christ (Acts 20:28 Lamsa Translation). Thus, to guard one's heart and keep it pure, a person must be a part of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ or be a member of the Church Of Christ. And, as Apostle Paul taught, one must obey with all his heart the truths found in the teachings he received.

Members of the Church Of Christ are constantly being taught the words of God during their congregational worship services. They are convinced that wholeheartedly obeying these teachings will guard their hearts. It is the sincere hope of the Church Administration for all members of the Church Of Christ to always hear and obey these teachings to remain pure in heart and to attain salvation on Judgment Day. 🙏

Based on the lesson taught by the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, during the ordination and pastoral visit at Lingayen, Pangasinan Central on April 19, 2014

The Trinity: a conundrum

By ARNEL M. ARMENIA

AS TO THE BELIEF in a triune God, a Catholic priest confessed: "In this life it is not possible for our human minds to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity. Human language, fashioned to speak of the visible realities of our experience, is strained to speak of this sublime truth about God" (*The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 184). The incomprehensibility of the doctrine led yet another Catholic writer to declare that "when we try to think of God as three Persons possessing one and the same nature, we find ourselves batting our head against the ceiling" (*The Faith Explained*, p. 28).

How mysterious is it?

Talking more about the "mystery of the Trinity," Trese went on to say, "We are dealing with a mystery of faith; no one, not even the greatest theologian, can hope in this life to really understand it." (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

Along the same vein, another priest, Martin J. Scott, in his book

God and Myself: An Inquiry Into the True Religion, declared:

"The Trinity is a wonderful mystery. No one understands it. The most learned theologian, the holiest Pope, the greatest saint, all are as mystified by it as the child of seven. It is one of the things which we shall know only when we see God face to face." (p. 118)

These words hardly bring comfort to those seeking the truth. And a simple question comes up: Why do they teach and stand up for a doctrine they themselves are so confused about?

What confuses them?

Expounding more on that which he himself has acknowledged as beyond the comprehension of even the "greatest theologian," Trese said:

"By an act of His almighty power, God did something that, to our human minds, seems impossible. He united His own divine nature to a true human nature, to a body and soul like ours. What leaves our head really whirling is the fact that this

union did not result in a being with two personalities—the personality of God and the personality of man. On the contrary, the two natures are united in one single Person, the God-Man Jesus Christ." (*The Faith Explained*, p. 73)

Even as the doctrine of the Trinity is admittedly confusing, add to this theological quandary the equally dizzying exposition—recorded in a Catholic literature entitled *A Prayer Book of Favorite Litanies* compiled by Albert J. Herbert, a priest—on the relation of the three persons of the Trinity with Mary, the mother of Jesus:

"Hail Mary! Daughter of God the Father.

"... Mother of God the Son.

"... Spouse of God the Holy Ghost."

Granting without conceding that Mary were the daughter, mother, and spouse of God, then it would appear that the Father is the father-in-law of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is father to Christ, and the Father is actually the grandfather of Christ! In the face of all these, one could only commiserate with the staunch believers of the Trinitarian doctrine. Yes, indeed, it is a confusing, head-whirling, dizziness-inducing doctrine.

What caused the confusion?

God is not a God of confusion. This is what is recorded in the Bible:

"For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." (I Cor. 14:33 King James Version)

Since God is not the author of confusion, He cannot be and is not the author of the Trinitarian belief! In fact, what do Catholic authori-

ties admit regarding this confusing belief? In the *Dictionary of the Bible* written by a Jesuit, John L. McKenzie, this is what he says:

"Trinity. The trinity of God is defined by the Church as the belief that in God are three persons who subsist in one nature. The belief as so defined was reached only in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and hence is not explicitly and formally a biblical belief." (p. 899)

It was the Catholic Church that invented the Trinitarian dogma. God has nothing to do with it. Their definition and belief in the doctrine of the Trinity were reached only in the 4th and 5th centuries because it was only in 325 AD at the Council of Nicaea that the belief that Christ is God was formulated and it was only in 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople when the Holy Spirit was declared God, too (*Discourses on the Apostles' Creed*, p. 206). Many centuries have passed since then and Catholic authorities still find the doctrine of Trinity convoluting for the simple fact that it is not the truth.

What is the truth?

Centuries before the Catholic Church began fabricating doctrines, the truth about who God is was already revealed—and there isn't an iota of confusion in it. A prophet of God declared thus:

"Don't you know that we all have God as our Father? Didn't the one God create each of us? ..." (Mal. 2:10 Contemporary English Version)

The expression "one God" referring to the Father leaves no room for the Son and the Holy Spirit to

be recognized as gods also as what the doctrine of Trinity wants people to believe. The servant of God, King David, also declared:

"Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For *there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You*, according to all that we have heard with our ears." (II Sam. 7:22 New King James Version)

**"For God
is not
the author
of confusion,
but of peace,
as in all
churches
of the
saints."**

I Corinthians 14:33
King James Version

Besides the Father, there is no other God. This was the truth then and it remains the truth now in the Christian era. The Apostle Paul declared thus, "Yet for us *there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*" (I Cor. 8:6 NKJV).

There is only one God, the Father. There is nothing complicated or confusing about this. There is no confusion in what Apostle Paul

taught the first-century Christians about who God is because it is the very teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught:

"Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ... And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.'" (John 17:1, 3 NKJV)

Are you seeking to serve the true God? Do you want eternal life? Accept and have faith in the teachings of the prophets, the apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the messengers to whom the knowledge of the mysteries of God's kingdom had been entrusted (Mark 4:11–12). These teachings are what the Church Of Christ in these last days upholds. We must reject the doctrine of the Trinity—for it is but a fabrication of people who, by their own admission, are confused about it. ☹

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Match made in heaven

By MANDY A. NEPOMUCENO

MARRIAGE IS SACRED because God Himself is the One who instituted it from the beginning (Gen. 1:27–28). He blessed Adam and Eve, the first people whom He created, to be united as husband and wife (Gen. 2:24).

There is an extremely important truth illustrated by this union, between a husband and his wife, as well as by their solemn agreement, and by their marriage—a compelling truth that has a great bearing on man's salvation and on the right to receive eternal life.

A sacred union

One of the important components of marriage is love, which motivates both sides to care for each other and make a vow that they will be together, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death separates them. And this kind of sacred union exemplifies a significant doctrine in the Bible that all must understand. In the Bible, what is likened to the relationship of a husband and wife? Apostle Paul teaches, thus:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.’ There is a deep secret truth revealed in this scripture, which I understand as applying to Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:31–32 Today’s English Version)

The sacred union between a husband and his wife in marriage illustrates a deep secret truth revealed—that of between Christ and His Church. According to Apostle Paul, as a husband and his wife are no longer two but one flesh, Christ and His Church have the same kind of union. He also taught that Christ made in Himself a one new man:

“Having in his flesh put an end to that which made the division between us, even the law with its rules and orders, so that he might make in himself, of the two, one new man, so making peace; And that the two might come into agreement with God in one body through the cross, so putting an end to that division.” (Eph. 2:15–16 Bible in Basic English)

The two being spoken of in these verses are Christ and His Church. The one new man was made because in it, the two came into agreement with God and were reconciled to Him. In this one new man, Christ is the head and the Church is His body (Col. 1:18). In God’s sight, they are no longer two but one—the one new man. And since the Church is Christ’s body, people who joined the Church become members or parts of the body of Christ, that is, they become members of the Church Of Christ (Rom. 12:4–5; Col. 1:18; Acts 20:28 Lamsa Translation).

A solemn agreement

By virtue of that special relationship and commitment between Christ and the members of His Church, which is His body, Apostle Paul further explained Christ’s duty as the head. This is what he taught:

“For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Savior of the church, his body.” (Eph. 5:23 TEV)

One of the duties that Christ will fulfill as the head of the Church is to be its Savior. He is duty-bound to do so because the Church is His body and He is its head. He gave His life for the Church so its members would be justified through His blood and be saved from God's judgment (Rom. 5:8–9).

Therefore, to be among those who will be forgiven of their sins and be saved by the Savior, one needs to become a member of the Church, which is the body of Christ. A person indeed receives a great blessing when he joins the Church Of Christ.

This does not mean that the Church Of Christ becomes the savior. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior, not the Church—this is an incontrovertible truth. However, the Bible also clearly teaches that it is the Church Of Christ that Christ will save because it is His body—this is also an undeniable truth.

A blessed marriage

What should be the quality of the Church so it can be presented worthy in marriage to Christ? The Bible answers:

“And to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Eph. 5:27 New International Version)

The Church has to be radiant, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Thus, it is not enough just to join the Church. Its mem-

bers should keep or obey God's commands until Christ's return (I Tim. 6:14). This is why members of the Church Of Christ are constantly taught and exhorted to cleanse themselves from all filthiness or renew their lives completely.

The Church Of Christ extends its invitation to all, not only to become members but also to lead a life that is in accordance with the commandments of God.

**“For a husband
has authority
over his wife
just as Christ
has authority
over the church;
and Christ
is himself
the Savior
of the church,
his body.”**

**Ephesians 5:23
Today's English Version**

With the great blessing one receives when he joins the Church comes also the responsibility to remain in the condition worthy to be presented to Christ.

Hence, the apostles explained even then that when one receives the Lord Jesus Christ or when one becomes a member of His Church, he should continue to live in Him, strengthened in the faith, rooted and built up in Him (Col. 2:6–7).

As parts of the body or members of the Church, they are taught not to abandon or neglect their membership in the Church Of Christ, no matter what they go through in this life, and whatever sacrifice they have to make—just like the bond that exists between a husband and his wife.

A hopeful promise

How great a blessing is it to be part of the solemn union of Christ and the Church? The Bible declares:

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” ... Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’” (Rev. 19:7, 9 New King James Version)

This is the inspiration of the members of the Church Of Christ, that is why they continue to be dedicated to their worship and services to God until they finish their race. They may experience as much difficulties as what those who are not members of the Church go through. But still, they carry on and look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb—our Lord Jesus Christ—in heaven wherein they are certainly invited, as the Bible assured.

Thus, if there is indeed a match made in heaven, which others dream about, it is the union of Christ and His Church. ☺

On responsible parenting and family planning

By CELERINO G. BACLAAN

MANY CHILDREN, young and old, regardless of their race and culture, have been in deep troubles. Deprived, they have been victims of violence and, as a consequence, could eventually be the perpetrators. If not addressed accordingly, this children's plight signifying a dark and frightening future of the world can unimaginably be worse. This worldwide complex and so serious problem reflects the gross consequences of a father's and a mother's failure to fulfill their God-given duty—to be responsible parents. One major cause of this problem is having a number of children that is more than what they can support and their failure to attend well to their children's other needs. This cause can be linked to parents' lack of knowledge and understanding of what responsible parenting truly is and what it entails as taught by the Holy Scriptures.

Such inadequacy prevents them from discerning circumstances significantly related to their being parents and making wise decisions to be able to fulfill their duty for which God has made them accountable. These circumstances are so compelling that they are reasons enough why parents ought to consider more seriously responsible parenting and family planning.

First things first

In the beginning, God Almighty, the Creator, "put everything in place" (Isa. 45:18 Living Bible) for His creation, and He wanted this to be preserved. So He set the laws and policies to serve as guidelines of all to maintain this order, especially on matters for the welfare of mankind. One of these matters concerns family. As the very first One

Who regards family as so important institution, God Himself created the earth as the suitable habitat for man, that is, all the things he needs to live happily were prepared (Gen. 1:1-26, 29-31).

To perpetuate the human race, it is important to note that the first thing that God did to the first man and woman before they lived together was He united them as husband and wife through the sanctity of marriage; and only after this marital union were they allowed to procreate (Gen. 1:28); and His instruction on procreation which includes "to subdue it" or to put under control applies more today. Expressing what God wishes for a family, the Bible states: "Happy are those who have reverence for the LORD, who live by his commands. Your work will provide for your needs; you will be happy and prosperous. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your home, and your sons will be like young olive trees around your table. A man who obeys the LORD will be blessed like this" (Ps. 128:1-4 Today's English Version). Clearly, having a happy family is a blessing from God.

Proper parenting

And to guide parents to have such kind of family—blessed by God with loved ones who bring joy to all its members, with prosperity, and with high spiritual stability founded on reverence for the Lord—He has given them the necessary instructions, both the dos and the don'ts of proper parenting, since the beginning. Primary among these are: for a father, being the head of his family, he should manage his own family well and work to earn an honest living to provide their needs (I Tim. 3:4; Eph. 4:28; I Tim 5:8); for a mother, being a good wife, she must love

her husband and children, be busy at home (Titus 2:4), and watch over the affairs of her household (Prov. 31:27); and for both of them, they should raise their children with Christian discipline and instruction (Eph. 6:4), that is, they should teach them to obey God's commandments, repeating them at all opportune times (Deut. 6:6-9) and setting themselves as good example (Titus 2:7; Rom. 2:21-23). Furthermore, but only on certain appropriate situations, parents should not withhold correcting their children with the rod (Prov. 23:13-14). However, they should be very careful in implementing disciplinary measures, verbal and nonverbal, so as not to provoke their children to anger that they become discouraged (Col. 3:21) and lose their self-esteem.

Despite the fact that God has done everything to guide parents in building the kind of family He will bless, the worldwide continuing disintegration of this institution affecting children most severely—that they have been damaged out of all proportion—is very alarming. For Christians, conservative they are in their family values, this breakdown indicates that the order that God set for building a harmonious and solid family has not been preserved but rather has been challenged and altered by cultures that promote norms that are unchristian. For keen conservative observers, these norms are not only going against Christian values but also setting a different order, which post modernist thinkers call paradigm shift or changing values, so to speak. To the majority this modern thinking is liberal and permissive, popular and easily acceptable, and satisfying their cravings or personal desires. For Christians, solving this global

crisis—families not having been in order and children being in troubles—requires the restoration of order that God established.

To restore the order set by God and to save many families from greater damages is to strictly observe responsible parenting as defined by the Holy Scriptures. Since family planning, a way to subdue or to put under control the number of children, and responsible parenting go hand in hand, inevitably, parents ought to take both of them more seriously. Otherwise, more and more children will be living with a family in ruin at their expense.

Neither be overlooked nor ignored

Had parents been God-fearing and properly guided by their authorities in keeping what God put in place concerning family matters, they would have been able to look at the circumstances threatening their family life and to build a happy one. These circumstances occur in chain reaction that many can not cope with.

First, continuing overpopulation. Population has been increasing in geometric progression, scaling a 7.3 billion recent record (United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs). Consequently, this worldwide problem has brought about either economic dislocations or displacements with domino effects to many.

Second, resources getting scarce and being depleted. Food production, only in arithmetic progression, can not meet the demands of the population. Resulting from man's abuse and misuse and natural or man-made destruction of God-given resources, majority have been deprived of the access to enjoy

**“Happy are
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reverence for
the LORD, who live
by his commands.
Your work will
provide for your
needs; you will
be happy and
prosperous.
Your wife will be
like a fruitful vine
in your home,
and your sons
will be like
young olive trees
around your table.
A man who obeys
the LORD will
be blessed
like this.”**

**Psalms 128:1-4
Today's English Version**

even the prime necessities of life like food, water, clothing, shelter, and education. In varying degrees, the deprived suffer temporarily or permanently.

Third, unattended or poorly attended children. Sad to say, economic pressures get much of parents' time that even that for their children, as God requires, is unwillingly sacrificed. At present, when a breadwinner must work for longer hours to meet the financial needs of his family, and his wife has to work, in many cases as an overseas worker, to augment the family income, their children are unattended or poorly attended that they suffer most from the adverse effects of such family disarray.

And fourth, 21st-century forms of violence assaulting youths. Among the major causes of violence that have turned the life of youths upside down are: media and technology that, when not properly supervised, poison the minds of the consumers and promote immorality; illegal drugs which can devastate users and innocents as well; family disintegration which has been proven to be a cause of many crimes; peer pressure which children usually keep to themselves; broken homes which cause a host of societal and economic ills; poor family environment which can bring about deep-seated problems; and bad neighborhood whose influence can be lifetime. Children are now living in a very dangerous environment where these plagues spare no one, he or she be rich or poor. Parents are the first ones who should protect their children from these rampant maladies of contemporary society.

Family planning

Responsible parenting should be regarded as much more fulfilling than any success one can attain in his or her academic or professional life. In fact, many parents who have succeeded in reaching their personal dreams, ironically, fail in this aspect of their life. Founded on reverent fear of God, responsible parenting in its true sense counts family planning as essential especially today when things assaulting children are traps and schemes just around them.

Responsible parents should nurture not only their relationship as husband and wife but also all

aspects of their children's life—physical, material, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual. They should see to it that all these are always in place. That is why on the basis of their capacity in terms of resources and time, they must carefully make plans as to the number of children to have and child spacing.

As to which family planning method to adopt, they are guided by the words of God as written in the Bible. Methods that are against the teaching of God such as abortion and the natural family planning (NFP) or sometimes called rhythm method are categorically not acceptable to them. Abortion is against God's will—in fact, He will punish a person that takes a human life (Gen. 9:6). And so is rhythm method, for God commands the husband and wife not to deprive each other except by mutual consent in order to spend their time in prayer (I Cor. 7:5). The Bible allows the use of contraceptive methods that are not abortive—such as oral contraceptives (pills), Intra-Uterine Device (IUD), condom, implants, injectables, tubal ligation, and vasectomy—however, the couple must seek medical advice and assistance.

Greater in the sight of God

Building a family successfully that dwells in solidarity, in harmony, in peace, in prosperity, and in happiness is a grace from God Almighty. It can be attained by those who dream for it and do follow the order that God set for this institution through His laws and policies that must be over and above those of man. On the contrary, if such order would be compromised and altered for whatever compelling considerations, there would be frustrations and sufferings with the children being the end losers.

Indeed responsible parenting must be highly regarded by all husbands and all wives, keeping it firmly founded on fear of God from which all thoughts and acts of righteousness emanate: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise" (Ps. 111:10 New International Version). ●

Ang sambahayang pagpapalain ng Diyos

Ni GLADY C. GADDI

BATAY SA maraming pag-aaral, malaking porsiyento ng nasasangkot sa krimen ay mga kabataang kabilang sa *broken home* o wasak na tahanan. Batay sa isang pag-aaral, mas mataas ang posibilidad na mahulog sa paggawa ng krimen ang mga batang buhat sa *broken family*—siyam na beses kaysa sa mga lumaki sa *stable family* (www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics). Ang masamang epekto sa mga kabataan ng pagiging kabilang sa *broken family* ay ang kawalan ng gana sa pag-aaral at ambisyon sa buhay. Marami sa mga ganitong kabataan ang nasasangkot sa mga krimen at nagkakaroon ng *behavioral problems* o suliranin sa pag-uugali, idagdag pa ang depresyon, ayon sa *Broken Family Effects on Children* na sinulat ni Dr. Ellen Verbakel, *Associate Professor* ng *Sociology* sa *Radboud University* ng *Netherlands*.

Ang ganitong malungkot na kalagayan ay maiiwasan ng bawat sambahayang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* kung pamamalagiin nilang ang mga aral ng Panginoong Diyos ang naghahari sa kanilang buhay. Dapat magsimula sa mga magulang ang pagsunod sa mga kalooban ng Diyos upang ang

kanilang sambahayan ay maging matatag at Kaniyang pagpalain.

Ang kasagraduhan ng kasal

Ang pag-aasawa ay banal o sagrado sapagkat ang nagtatag nito ay ang Panginoong Diyos mismo. Bago Niya pinapagsama sina Adan at Eva ay binasbasan o ikinasal Niya sila:

“At nilalang ng Dios ang tao ayon sa kaniyang sariling larawan, ayon sa larawan ng Dios siya nilalang; nilalang niya sila na lalake at babae. At sila’y binasbasan ng Dios, at sa kanila’y sinabi ng Dios, Kayo’y magpalaanakin, at magpakarami, at kalatan ninyo ang lupa, at inyong supilin; at magkaroon kayo ng kapangyarihan sa mga isda sa dagat, at sa mga ibon sa himpapawid, at sa bawat hayop na gumagalaw sa ibabaw ng lupa.” (Gen. 1:27–28)

Kaya, sa batas ng Diyos, ang isang sambahayan ay nagsisimula sa pagpapakasal ng isang lalake at babae o pag-aasawa. Upang maiangat ang kasagraduhan ng kasal, itinaturo ng Biblia na “dapat igalang ng lahat ang pag-aasawa, at maging tapat sa isa’t isa ang mag-asawa...” (Heb. 13:4 *Magandang Balita Biblia*).

Samakatuwid, ang lumalabag sa utos na ito ng Diyos ay hindi lamang sa kaniyang asawa nagkakasala kundi higit sa lahat ay sa Diyos.

Ang obligasyon ng mag-asawa sa isa’t isa

Kailangang ipadama ng lalake ang pagmamahal sa kaniyang asawa tulad ng iniukol na pagmamahal ng ating Panginoong Jesucristo sa Kaniyang Iglesia. Kung kinakailangang ihandog niya ang kaniyang buhay para sa kaniyang asawa, handa niyang gawin ito bilang patunay ng kaniyang pagmamahal:

“Mga lalaki, ibigin ninyo ang inyong asawa, gaya ng pag-ibig ni Cristo sa iglesia. Inihandog niya ang kanyang buhay para rito.” (Efe. 5:25 MB)

Dapat sa isang asawang lalake na maging mapagmahal sa kaniyang maybahay tulad ng pagmamahal niya sa kaniyang sariling katawan. Hindi niya ito kinakailangan manapa’y pinakakain at inaalagaan. Ganito ang mahigpit na tagubilin ni Apostol Pablo:

“Dapat mahalín ng mga lalaki ang kani-kanilang asawa tulad ng sarili nilang katawan. Ang

lalaking nagmamahal sa kanyang asawa ay nagmamahal sa kanyang sarili. Walang taong namumuhi sa sarili niyang katawan, bagkus ito'y pinakakain at inaala-gaan, gaya ng ginagawa ni Cristo sa iglesya." (Efe. 5:28-29 MB)

Kahit nagmamahalan sa isa't isa, dumarating sa buhay ng mag-asawa ang di-pagkakaunawaan. Dapat tiyak ng magkabilang panig na kung sakaling may bumangong suliranin o di-pagkakaunawaan ay hindi sila gagamit ng masasamang pananalita na maaaring magbunga ng kawalang-kapayapaan: "Huwag kayong gumamit ng masamang pananalita; sikaping lagi na ang pangungusap ninyo'y yaong makabubuti ..." (Efe. 4:29 MB). Kaya mahalagang matiyak ng bawat isa ang mabuting pakikitungo sa kaniyang kabiya (I Ped. 3:7) upang mamalaging payapa ang sambahayan.

Dahil nga sa ang Panginoong Diyos ang nagtatag ng pag-aasawa, naisabatas man sa maraming bansa ang diborsiyo, sa mga tunay na lingkod ng Diyos ay mananaig pa rin ang pagsunod sa kalooban Niya na hindi dapat maghiwalay ang mag-asawa (Mat. 19:5-9; Mal. 2:16). Kapag nasusunod nang lubos ng mag-asawa ang mga salita ng Diyos ay tiyak na hindi sila maghihiwalay o hahantong pa sa diborsiyo, kundi lalong magiging masaya at panatag ang sambahayan.

Ang obligasyon ng ama ng sambahayan

Ang isa sa mga tungkulin ng ama

ng sambahayan ay ang ipag-kaloob ang mga pangunahing pangangailangang materyal ng kaniyang pamilya. Subalit, sa ibabaw ng lahat ng mga gampanin ng isang ama ay dapat niyang tiyak na naituturo niya sa buong pamilya ang tunay na pagsamba at pagpupuri sa Panginoong Diyos. Kalakip din ang pagtuturo sa sambahayan ng buong pusong paglalagak ng pagtitiwala sa magagawa ng Diyos sa ating buhay sa kabila ng napakabigat na mga pagsubok:

"Nagdurugo ang puso ko, kung aking maalaala Ang lumipas na kahapong lagi kaming sama-sama, Papunta sa templo ng Diyos na ako ang nangunguna; Pinupuri namin ang Diyos, sa pag-awit na masaya! Bakit ako nalulungkot, nabahala nang mainam? Sa Diyos ako may tiwala, siyang aking aasahan; Diyos na Tagapagligtas, muli ko s'yang aawitan." (Awit 42:4-5 MB)

Ang isa pa sa dapat na maging katangian ng isang ama ay ang pagiging mapagkalinga sa kaniyang sambahayan upang maramdaman ng isa't isa ang dalisay na pagmamahalan at mapanatili ang katiwasayan sa loob ng tahanan. Masama ang maging tamad o ang hindi marunong kumalinga sa kaniyang pamilya sapagkat ang gayon ay masahol pa sa hindi sumasampalataya:

"Sinumang hindi kumakalinga sa kanyang mga kamag-anak, lalo na sa sariling pamilya, ay tumatalikod sa pananampalataya at masahol pa sa hindi mananampalataya." (I Tim. 5:8 New Pilipino Version)

Ang obligasyon ng ina ng tahanan

Tungkulin ng asawang babae na umibig, gumalang, at pasakop sa kaniyang asawa:

"Gayon man ay umibig naman ang bawa't isa sa inyo sa kaniyang sariling asawa gaya ng sa kaniyang sarili; at ang babae ay gumalang sa kaniyang asawa." (Efe. 5:33)

"Mga babae, *pasakop kayo* sa inyo-inyong sariling asawa, na gaya ng sa Panginoon." (Efe. 5:22)

"Upang kanilang maturuan ang mga babaing may kabataan na magsiibig sa kanikaniyang asawa, magsiibig sa kanilang mga anak, mangagpakahinahon, Mangagpakahinahon, mangagpakalinis, mangagpakasipag sa bahay, magagandang-loob, pasakop sa kanikaniyang asawa, upang huwag lapastanganin ang salita ng Dios." (Tito 2:4-5)

Karaniwan na sa kasalukuyang panahon na ang asawang babae ay naghahanapbuhay rin upang makatulong sa gugulin ng sambahayan. Maaaring mas mataas pa nga ang kinikita nila. Dapat laging isaisip ng asawang babae na kahit mas malaki ang kaniyang kinikita kaysa sa asawang lalake ay hindi nangangahulugan na maaari na siyang maging dominante at di magpasakop sa kaniyang asawa.

Ang binigyan ng awtoridad sa sambahayan ay ang lalake, subalit kailangang kasangguni rin ang kabiya sa mga pagpapasiya sa mga patakaran at disiplina na kanilang ipinatutupad.

Ang isa pa sa napakahalagang magampanan ng ina ng tahanan, na madalas ay mas maraming oras na kasama ang mga anak, ay ang pagsubaybay sa paglaki ng kaniyang mga anak:

“Kaniyang tinitignang mabuti ang mga lakad ng kaniyang sangbahayan, At hindi kumakain ng tinapay ng katamaran. Nagsisibangon ang kaniyang mga anak, at tinatawag siyang mapalad; *Gayon din* ang kaniyang asawa, at pinupuri siya niya, na *sinasabi*: Maraming anak na babae ay nagsisigawang may kabaitan, Nguni’t ikaw, ay humihigit sa kanilang lahat.” (Kaw. 31:27-29)

Ang tungkulin ng mga anak

Ang mga anak din ay may mga pananagutang dapat magampanan upang manatiling matatag at pinagpapala ang kanilang sambahayan. Halimbawa, kung sila ay napapag-aral ng kanilang magulang sa kabila ng kahirapan sa mundong ito ay kinakailangang buong sikap silang tumuklas ng karunungan:

“Karunungan ay pinaka pangulong bagay; *kaya’t* kunin mo ang karunungan: Oo, sa lahat mong kukunin ay kunin mo ang unawa. Iyong ibunyi siya, at kaniyang itataas ka: Kaniyang dadalhin ka sa karangalan, pagka iyong niyakap siya.” (Kaw. 4:7-8)

Bagaman sa mundong ito ay hindi maiiwasan na makisalamuha sa iba’t ibang uri ng tao, mahigpit na tagubilin ng Diyos sa mga lingkod Niya na sila ay hindi dapat umayon sa mundong ito (Roma 12:2), kahit pa sabihing ang isang bagay o gawain ay uso at ginagawa ng nakararami. Pinaiiwas ang mga anak na makisama o makipagbarkada sa mga lasenggo, hindi lamang sa alak kundi maging sa droga, sapagkat masasadlak sila sa kahirapan:

“Anak, maging matalino ka at pag-isipan mong mabuti ang iyong buhay. Huwag kang makikisama sa mga lasenggo at sa masiba sa pagkain. Pagkat sila’y masasadlak sa kahirapan, at darating ang panahong magdadamit ng basahan.” (Kaw. 23:19-21 MB)

Ang isa pa sa mga pangunahing utos ng Diyos sa mga anak ay tungkol sa paggalang sa magulang, gaya ng ipinahayag ng Panginoong Jesucristo:

“Sapagka’t sinabi ng Diyos, Igalang mo ang iyong ama at ang iyong ina: at, Ang manungyaw sa ama at sa ina, ay mamatay siyang walang pagsala.” (Mat. 15:4)

Kaya, isang malaking kasalanan ang nagagawa ng sinumang hindi gumagalang sa kaniyang ama at ina. Dapat nating pakinggan ang mga magulang sapagkat sila ang pinagkakautangan ng ating buhay (Kaw. 23:22).

Sakaling ang ipinagagawa ng mga magulang ay hindi kasang-ayon ng turo ng Panginoong Diyos, sino ang higit na dapat sundin?

“Ang magiging mga kaaway ng tao ay ang mga miyembro ng sarili niyang pamilya. Ang tao na umiibig sa kaniyang ama o ina nang higit kaysa akin ay hindi karapat-dapat na maging alagad (o tagasunod) ko. Ang tao na umiibig sa anak na lalake o anak na babae nang higit kaysa akin ay hindi karapat-dapat na maging alagad (o tagasunod) ko.” (Mat. 10:36-37 God’s Word, isinalin mula sa Ingles)

Kaya may hangganan ang pagsunod ng anak sa magulang. Hindi dapat sundin ang magulang kapag nag-uutos na ng labag sa aral ng ating Panginoong Diyos at ng ating Panginoong Jesucristo. Hindi dapat humigit ang pag-ibig ng anak

sa magulang sa pag-ibig niya sa Diyos at kay Cristo.

Ang lalong dapat magampanan

Hinding-hindi dapat malimutan at pabayaang isang sambahayan ang pagsamba sa Panginoong Diyos. Kahit gaano kabigat na pagsubok ang pinagdaraan ay lalong kailangang sambahin ang Manlilikha taglay ang kasabikan ng puso. Kahit pa tigib na ng pagsubok at kalungkutan ay hindi pa rin dapat talikuran ang mga pagpupuri sa Diyos:

“Kung paanong ang mga batis ang hinahanap ng usa, gayon, O Dios, hinahanap ka ng aking kaluluwa. Ang kaluluwa ko’y nauuhaw sa Dios, sa Dios na buhay. Kailan kaya ako makalalakad para ang Dios ay tagpuin? ... Nagdaramdam ang aking kaluluwa tuwing maaalaala ko ang mga bagay na ito: dati ako’y kasama ng maraming tao samantalang nangunguna patungo sa bahay ng Dios, sumisigaw sa galak at nagpapasalamat sa gitna ng bayang nagdiriwang. Bakit ka nalulungkot, O kaluluwa ko? Sa Dios mo ilagak ang iyong pag-asa, pagkat pupurihin ko pa rin siya, ang aking Tagapagligtas.” (Awit 42:1-2, 4-5 NPV)

Kapag isinabuhay ng mga lingkod ng Diyos ang lahat ng aral Niyang ito, maiingatang buo ang sambahayan, maiiwasan ng sinumang miyembro ng pamilya na masangkot sa mga kasamaan at makatitiyak sila na hindi mama-matay ang ningas ng Espiritu Santo na nasa kanila. Ang ganitong uri ng sambahayang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ang makaaasa na ang kanilang pananam-palataya ay magiging matibay at ang kanilang buhay ay pagpapalain ng Panginoong Diyos. ☺

Payo sa mga kabataang Cristiano

NI CHARMIL S. CASTRO

NOONG OKTUBRE 1973, itinatag ang mga kapisanan para sa mga kabataang *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Una, ang KADIWA na ang buong katawagan ay “Kabataang may Diwang Wagas” mula sa nauna nitong katawagan na “Kapisanang Maligayang Pagtatagumpay” (KMP), na binubuo ng mga kaanib na may edad 18 pataas na wala pang asawa. Pangalawa, ang kapisanang *Binhi* na ang mga kaanib ay may edad 12 hanggang 17. Sa taong ito, ginugunita ng mga kapisanang KADIWA at *Binhi* ang kanilang ika-45 na taon ng pagkakatatag.

Itinatag ng Pamamahala sa loob ng *Iglesia* ang mga kapisanang ito udyok ng pagmamalasakit na mapangalagaan ang kapakanang espirituwal ng mga kabataang *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Upang ito ay maisakatuparan, naglulunsad ng iba’t ibang programa at aktibidad na naaayon

sa adhikain ng mga kapisanang KADIWA at *Binhi*. Ang mga ito ay upang mapaunlad ang buhay espirituwal ng bawat kaanib nito, at mahubog sila na maging mga ulirang binata at dalagang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* na naghahanda sa kina-bukasan. Isinusulong din nito na ikintal sa kanila ang halaga ng pagkakaroon ng matatag at malinis na ikinabubuhay, kahandaan sa buhay may-asawa, mataas na uri ng paggalang sa mga magulang, at pagiging mabuting mamamayan.

Dadalhin sa kahatulan

Hindi tutol ang Panginoong Diyos na ang Kaniyang mga lingkod ay maging masaya, ngunit hindi sa paraang gawin nila ang kanilang balang maibigan:

“Magalak ka, O binata, sa iyong kabataan, at bayaang pasayahin ka ng iyong puso sa mga araw ng iyong [ganap] na kabataan. At lumakad [ka] sa mga

daan ng iyong puso at sa panin-
ngin ng iyong mga mata, subalit
alaman mo na sa lahat ng mga
bagay na ito ay dadalhin ka ng
Diyos sa kahatulan.” (Ecles. 11:9
Amplified Bible)*

Bagama’t nais ng Diyos na maging masaya tayo, dapat nating matiyak na hindi tayo gagawa ng anuman na maghahatid sa atin sa kahatulan. Dapat muna tayong mag-isip nang mabuti bago tayo gumawa ng kahit ano. Huwag nating hayaan na kontrolin tayo ng ating emosyon, katulad ng galit. Baka ang ibunga nito ay mapahamak ang kaugnayan natin, hindi lamang sa ibang tao kundi, lalo na sa Diyos. Ganito ang paalala sa atin ng Biblia:

“Huwag mong bayaan na kontrolin ka ng galit, at huwag mong bayaan na dalhin ka ng iyong katawan sa kasalanan. Ginagawa ng mga tao ang mga bagay na kamangmangan sa buwang-liwayway ng buhay ha-

'bang sila ay bata." (Ecles. 11:10 Easy-to-Read Version)*

Hindi dahilan ang pagiging bata para matuksong gawin ang masama sa mata ng Diyos. Kaya, sundin natin ang itinuturong ito ng Biblia:

"Kaya alisin mo [ang mga kahalayan na nagwawakas sa] kapanglawan at pagkayamot ng iyong puso at isip at ilayo mo ang kasamaan mula sa iyong katawan, sapagkat ang kabataan at ang buwang-liwayway ng buhay ay walang kabuluhan [panandalian, walang saysay, hungkag, at hubad sa katotohanan]." (Ecles. 11:10 AMP)*

Dapat alisin ng mga kabataang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ang kahalayan at layuan ang kasamaan. Ang mga makamundong hilig ay hindi dapat masumpungan sa sinumang ayaw na mahatulan ng Diyos. Paakay tayo sa Diyos sa tamang pamumuhay:

"Kaya tiyakin ninyo na kayo ay maingat na lumalakad [namumuhay nang may karangalan, layunin, at katapangan; na nilalayuan yaong mga kinukunsinti at pinapayagan ang kasamaan], hindi bilang mga mangmang, kundi gaya ng matatalino [matino, marunong, mga taong may mabuting paghatol], na sinasamantala ang inyong panahon [sa daigdig, na kinikilala at sinasamantala ang bawat pagkakataon at ginagamit ito nang may karunungan at kasipagan], sapagkat ang mga araw ay [puno ng] kasamaan." (Efe. 5:15-16 AMP2015)*

Ang dapat na bantayan

Hindi natin dapat sundin kung ano na lamang ang dikta ng ating puso na salungat sa aral ng Diyos. Ang sabi ng Biblia:

"Sapagkat mula sa loob, sa puso ng mga tao, lumalabas ang masasamang kaisipan ng kahalayan, pagnanakaw, pagpatay, pangangalunya, na iniimbong ang pag-aari ng mga iba, katampalasan, pandaraya, kalaswaan, pagkainggit, paninirang-puri, kahambugan, at lahat ng iba pang kahangalan. Lahat ng mga karima-rimarim na mga bagay na ito ay nagmumula sa loob; ang mga ito ang nagpaparumi sa inyo at nagiging sanhi upang kayo ay hindi maging karapat-dapat sa Diyos." (Mar. 7:21-23 The Message)*

Ito ang dahilan at binabalaan tayo ng Diyos na bantayan ang ating puso. Ang kasamaan ng tao ay lumalabas mula sa kaniyang puso at ito ang sanhi ng hindi niya pagiging karapat-dapat sa Diyos.

Ang isa pang dapat nating iwasan ay ang panlilibak sa katotohanan (II Ped. 3:3-4 Living Bible). Ang kasamaang ito ay lalong laganap sa panahong ito sapagkat maraming tao ang sumasalungat sa mga aral ng Diyos. Gagamitin ang tinatawag nilang "katalinuhan" at "katotohanan" upang diumano'y pabulaanan nila ang eksistensiya ng Diyos at patunayang hindi totoo ang kaligtasang ipinangako sa tunay na Iglesia. Sinasabi naman ng iba na walang magiging problema kung sila ay nasa paggawa ng kasalanan sapagkat magka-

karoon pa naman daw sila ng pagkakataong makapagbalik-loob. Gayunman, alalahanin natin na paparating na ang Araw ng Paghuhukom at dapat natin itong paghandaan.

Ang isang maaaring makapagpahamak, lalung-lalo na sa isang kabataan, ay ang pagiging *spiritually immature*.

"Upang tayo ay huwag nang maging mga bata [spiritually immature], na sinisiklut-siklot paroo't parito [tulad ng mga barko sa isang bagyo sa dagat] at tinatangay ng bawat hangin

"Huwag mong bayaan na kontrolin ka ng galit, at huwag mong bayaan na dalhin ka ng iyong katawan sa kasalanan. Ginagawa ng mga tao ang mga bagay na kamangmangan sa buwang-liwayway ng buhay habang sila ay bata."

Ecclesiastes 11:10
Easy-to-Read Version*

ng [pabagu-bagong] doktrina, sa pamamagitan ng katusuhan at panlilinlang ng [mga taong walang pagsasaalang-alang sa katuwiran], sa pamamagitan ng mapanlinlang na pamamaraan ng mga taong nakahanda na gawin ang anumang bagay [para sa personal nilang kapakinabangan].” (Efe. 4:14 AMP2015)*

Ang *spiritually mature* ay naniindigan sa tamang doktrina o aral. Kaya, tayo’y dapat maging maingat at tiyaking lahat ng ating ginagawa ay naaayon sa aral ng Diyos.

Masama na ang kabataan ay sumusunod lamang sa sariling kagustuhan. Itinuro ng Panginoong Jesucristo:

“Pagkatapos ay sinabi niya, ‘May isang tao na may dalawang anak na lalake. Sinabi ng nakababata sa kaniyang ama, “Ama, nais kong ngayon mo na ibigay sa akin ang mapupunta sa akin.” Kaya hinati ng ama ang ari-arian para sa kanila. Hindi nagtagal nag-impake ng kaniyang mga gamit ang nakababatang anak at lumisan patungo sa isang malayong bansa. Doon, sa kawalang disiplina at pagwawaldas, ay sinayang niya ang lahat ng taglay niya. Pagkatapos maubos ang lahat ng kaniyang salapi, nagkaroon ng matinding kagutom sa buong bansa at nagsimula siyang maghirap. Namasukan siya sa isang mamamayan doon na naglagay sa kaniya sa kaniyang bukirin upang magpakain sa mga baboy. Gutom na gutom siya anupa’t maging ang bahagi ng mais na ipinapakain sa mga baboy ay ninais niyang kainin, subalit walang magbigay sa

kaniya ng kahit ano’.” (Lucas 15:11–16 MSG)*

Pansinin natin na ang itinuturo ng Panginoong Jesucristo ay tungkol sa mga taong walang disiplina at nagwawaldas. Sila ang mga taong sumusunod na lamang sa kanilang sariling kagustuhan at sinasayang ang lahat ng nasa kanila. Kapag nauubos na ang lahat ay maiiwan silang gutom at nasa kahirapan.

Kaya, dapat matiyak nating hindi tayo paiimpluwensiya sa masama. Sa halip, ang kalooban ng Diyos ang dapat isabuhay upang makatiyak na tayo ay hindi mapapahamak at mahuhulog sa Kaniyang hatol.

Samantalain ang panahon

Hindi tayo dapat magpatangay sa pilosopiya at intelektuwalismo, maging sa materyalismo. Sabi ng mga apostol:

“Tiyakin ninyo na walang sinumang tumangay sa inyo bilang kanilang nasila o gawin kayong bihang ng diumano’y tinatawag nilang pilosopiya at intelektuwalismo at malinaw na walang kabuluhang {pandarraya o kasinungalingan} (walang saysay na mga likhang isip at {karaniwang bagay na walang kapararakan o kalokohan}), pagsunod sa tradisyon ng mga tao (mga kaisipan ng mga tao sa materyal sa halip na sa espirituwal na daigdig), pawang mga malalabong haka-haka na sumusunod sa hindi pa ganap at panimulang mga pagtuturo ng sandaigdigan at pagwawalanghalaga [sa mga pagtuturo] ni Cristo (ang Mesias).” (Col. 2:8 AMP)*

Ang tao ay maaaring tila intelektuwal ngunit mangmang sa harap ng Diyos—kung sumusunod lang sa kaisipan ng tao at hindi sa Kaniyang mga salita. Magpakatalino tayo at pagingatan ang mga bagay na ating maririnig maging ang itinuturo sa eskuwelahan ng sanlibutan na labag sa aral ng Diyos. Hindi dapat patangay ang mga kabataang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* sa mga ito. Huwag basta sumunod sa kung anong nauuso (Exo. 23:2 ETRV).

Kung ang isang tao, bagay, salita, at gawi ay uso, tanyag o “sikat” ay hindi ibig sabihing dapat na itong gayahin. Maging maingat tayo sa mga nakikita at naririnig natin sa *popular media*—musika, pelikula, at iba pa—na nagpapauso ng *premarital sexual relations*, pangangalunya, *suicide*, pagiging materyalistiko, at marami pang labag sa mga utos ng Diyos. Ang mga ito ay hindi dapat gayahin. Dapat tayong magpakatalino lalo na’t napaliligiran tayo ng kasamaan (I Cor. 15:22 Expanded Bible).

Dapat maging maingat tayo sa mga taong nakapaligid sa atin. Binababalaan tayo sa masasamang kaibigan na magdadala sa atin sa kapahamakan sa halip na sa pagsunod sa Diyos. Ito ang isang layunin kaya itinatag ng Pamamahala ng Iglesia ang Kapisanang *Binhi*—para maiiwas ang mga kabataan sa masasamang kasama. Masanay silang magpakatalino at mabuhay ayon sa mga turo ni Cristo, gaya ng ipinayo ni Apostol Pablo:

“Ang payo ko sa inyo ay simple at diretsahan: Ipagpatuloy

lamang ninyo kung ano ang ibinigay sa inyo. Tinanggap ninyo si Cristo Jesus, ang Panginoon; ngayon ay *ibuhay* ninyo Siya. Kayo ay nakaugat nang malalim sa Kaniya. Kayo ay matatag na itinayo sa Kaniya. Alam ninyo ang inyong daan sa inyong pananam-palataya. Ngayon ay gawin ninyo kung ano ang naituro sa inyo. Wala na kayo sa paaralan; tigilan na ninyo ang pag-aaral sa aralin at magsimula nang *ibuhay* ito! At bayaan ninyo na ang inyong pamumuhay ay mag-umapaw sa pagpapasalamat." (Col. 2:6-7 MSG)

Mamuhay tayo nang ayon sa pagkatanggap natin kay Cristo. Pinaaalalahanan tayo na mag-ugat nang malalim at maging matatag na nakatayo kay Cristo—hindi tayo dapat natitinag at nadadala sa paglabag sa tinanggap nating aral. Mayroon tayong matibay na pundasyon kay Cristo Jesus at isabuhay natin ang Kaniyang turo.

Ang dapat sundin

Ang isa sa mga kasangkapan ng Diyos upang magabayan ang mga kabataan ay ang mga magulang. Ito ang pagtuturo ng mga apostol:

"Mga anak, sundin ninyo ang inyong mga magulang sa Panginoon [iyon ay, tanggapin ninyo ang kanilang patnubay at disiplina bilang Kaniyang mga kinatawan], sapagkat ito ang tama [sapagkat ang pagsunod ay nagtuturo ng karunungan at disiplina sa sarili]." (Efe. 6:1 AMP2015)*

Ang mga magulang sa Panginoon na tinutukoy ay ya-

ong ang itinaturo ay ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos kaya dapat nating tanggapin ang patnubay at disiplina nila sapagkat kinakasangkapan sila ng Diyos sa pagtuturo sa mga anak o kabataan. At kung sinusunod natin ang patnubay at disiplina

ng ating mga magulang, ito'y makatutulong sa atin upang magkaroon pa ng karunungan at disiplina sa sarili.

Higit sa lahat, naglagay ang Diyos ng Pamamahala sa Iglesia upang maipahayag ang Kaniyang mga salita (Col. 1:25). Sila ang nagtuturo ng kalooban ng Diyos upang matamo natin ang karunungan at magkaroon tayo ng disiplina sa sarili. Kaya, dapat nating sundin ang Pamamahala sa Iglesia.

Kapag sinunod ng mga kabataang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ang lahat ng mga kalooban ng Diyos na itinaturo ng Pamamahala ay makatitiyak tayo na hindi sila maiimpluwensiyahan ng mga kasamaan sa mundong ito. Makatitiyak din tayo na mamamalagi sila sa kalagayang hindi mamamatay ang ningas ng Espiritu Santo na ipinagkaloob ng Diyos sa kanila. Hindi pababayaan ng Diyos ang namumuhay nang ayon sa kabanalan.

Kaya, ilagak natin ang ating tiwala sa Kaniya at masusumpungan natin Siya. Huwag natin Siyang talikuran sapagkat ayaw ng Diyos na tayo'y mawalay at gusto Niyang makarating tayo sa hangganan, upang matamo ang kaligtasan. Manatili tayong sumusunod sa Diyos habang tayo'y nabubuhay upang matamo natin ang tulong Niya at lalo na ang kaligtasan pagdating ng Araw ng Paghuhukom. ☺

"Mga anak, sundin ninyo ang inyong mga magulang sa Panginoon [iyon ay, tanggapin ninyo ang kanilang patnubay at disiplina bilang Kaniyang mga kinatawan], sapagkat ito ang tama [sapagkat ang pagsunod ay nagtuturo ng karunungan at disiplina sa sarili]."

Efeso 6:1 Amplified Bible 2015*

* Isinalin mula sa Ingles

'Huwag papaghiwalayin ng tao'

BAWAT TAO, KULTURA, at relihiyon ay may iba't ibang pananaw sa pag-aasawa. Para sa mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, ang pag-aasawa ay isang sagradong institusyon dahil itinuturo ng Biblia na ang Diyos ang may kalooban na magkaroon nito.

Ang Diyos ang nagtatag ng pag-aasawa nang ibinigay Niya ang Kaniyang mga kautusan at basbas sa unang lalake at unang babae bago sila namuhay nang magkasama (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-22). Sa paningin ng Diyos, hindi na sila dalawa kundi iisa (Gen. 2:24). Dahil pinapagsama na sila ng Diyos, ang mag-asawa ay dapat mamalaging kasal sa isa't isa. Ito ang tinindigan ni Cristo nang sabihin Niya, "Ang pinapagsama nga ng Diyos ay huwag papaghiwalayin ng tao" (Mar. 10:9).

Ang taling bumubuklod sa kanila bilang isa ay ang mga kautusan ng Diyos (Roma 7:2). Kaya, sagrado ang pag-aasawa at dapat itong igalang ng lahat (Heb. 13:4). Ang mga aral na ito ng Biblia tungkol sa pag-aasawa ang dapat gumabay sa mag-asawang lalake at babae at dapat ding isaalang-alang ng mga nagbabalak na lumagay sa buhay may-asawa.

Ang paglusong sa buhay may-asawa ay hindi biro. Kaya, dapat muna itong pag-isipang mabuti at ipagpanata sa Diyos. Dapat ding isaalang-alang ang payo at gabay ng mga magulang. Ang sertipiko ng kasal ay hindi isang piraso ng papel lamang. Ito ay isang dokumentong legal na sa paglagda nito ay inihahayag ng mag-asawa na kanilang itataguyod ang pagsasama nila. Tanging ang kamatayan lamang ng sinuman sa kanila ang magpapawalang-bisa sa kanilang kasal.

Dahil ang pag-aasawa ay isang panghabambuhay na pagsasama, dapat alagaan at ingatan ito ng mag-asawa upang kanilang makamtan ang kailigayahang nilayon ng Diyos na idulot nito sa kanila. Dapat nilang gawin ito sa pamamagitan ng pagsunod sa mga kautusan at tagubilin Niya, na nakasulat sa Biblia, na siyang bumubuklod sa kanila.

Itinuturo ng Biblia na dapat ibigin ng mag-asawa ang isa't isa (Efe. 5:25, 28-29; Tito 2:4). Ang tunay na umiibig sa asawa ay hindi makikipagrelasyon sa iba. Dapat maayos at magalang na pakitunguhan ng lalake ang kaniyang asawa, at hindi niya dapat pinagmamalupitan siya (I Ped. 3:7; Col. 3:19). Samantala, ang babae ay dapat pasakop at gumalang sa kaniyang asawa (Efe. 5:22, 33).

Dapat silang mabuhay nang matuwid at lumayo sa kasamaan (Kaw. 2:16-20). At kung sila'y pinagkalooban ng Diyos ng mga anak, dapat nilang kalingain at subaybayan ang kanilang sambahayan (I Tim. 5:8; Kaw. 31:27).

Para sa mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, may malalim na kahulugan ang pagkakabuklod ng mag-asawa. Ayon kay Apostol Pablo, ang relasyon ni Cristo sa Kaniyang Iglesia ay itinulad sa relasyon ng lalake sa kaniyang asawa (Efe. 5:31-32). Ang sabi pa ng apostol, ang Iglesia ay ipinakipagkasundo kay Cristo upang maging asawa (II Cor. 11:2; 1:1); kaya tinawag niya si Cristo na "esposo" ng Iglesia (II Cor. 11:2 Abriol). Dahil dito, ang Iglesia ay ipinakipag-isa kay Cristo, tulad ng ginawa sa mag-asawa (I Cor. 1:9). Ito ang isa sa mga dahilan kaya tinitindigan ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ang aral na nakasulat sa Bibla: ang pina-

Ang mga taong tunay na kay Cristo

Ni ERVIN M. ALMEDINA

pagsama ng Diyos ay huwag papaghiwalayin ng tao.

Ang tinutukoy ni Apostol Pablo na Iglesia ay ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Gawa 20:28 Lamsa Translation).

Dahil ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay ipinakipagkasundo na kay Cristo upang maging asawa, hindi Siya magkakaroon ng kaugnayan sa ibang tao na hindi kabilang sa Kaniyang Iglesia. Kung sasabihin ng sinuman na gagawin ito ni Cristo ay para na rin nilang sinabing Siya ay nangangalunya—isang malaking kamalian at kalapastanganan ito.

Tulad ng isang mabuting asawa, tapat si Cristo sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* dahil ito ang Iglesiang minamahal at inaaruga Niya. Ito ang Iglesiang ililigtas Niya (Efe. 5:23, 25, 29).

Ang katunayang minamahal at inaaruga ni Cristo ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay ang patuloy na pagdami ng mga kaanib at paglago ng kanilang buhay espirituwal kahit panahon pa ng kahirapan at kagipitan.

Ang mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay inaasahan namang magtatapat kay Cristo sa lahat ng panahon. Dapat nating gawin ito sa pamamagitan ng matapat na pagsunod sa mga aral ng Diyos na itinuro ni Cristo at sa pamamagitan ng pagiging matatag at aktibong kaanib ng Kaniyang Iglesia. ☺

Bienvenido A. Santiago Jr.
Associate Editor

ANG MGA SUNUD-SUNOD na di-pangkaraniwang pangyayari katulad ng matitindi at mapaminsalang mga kalamidad, kawalan ng kapayapaan sa iba't ibang bansa, at ang lumulubhang kahirapan ay ilan lamang sa katuparan ng mga palatandaan, malapit na ang Araw ng Paghuhukom. Kung gayon, ngayon higit kailanman, kailangang matiyak ng tao na siya ay sa Panginoong Jesucristo, sapagkat ang mga taong tunay na kay Cristo ang tinitiyak ng Biblia na maliligtas sa Araw ng Paghuhukom.

Upang matiyak ng sinuman kung siya nga ay tunay na kay Cristo ay hindi opinyon o kuru-kuro ang dapat niyang pakinggan at sundin kundi ang mga katotohanang nakasulat sa Biblia.

Ang ipinakilala ni Cristo na Kaniya

Sa panahon natin ngayon, napakaraming nagpapakilalang sila ay Cristiano o mga alagad ni Cristo.

Naniniwala silang sapat na ang kumilala lamang kay Cristo upang maging Kaniya. Ngunit, kaibayo ito ng pagtuturo mismo ni Cristo:

“Ang aking sariling mga tupa ay nakikinig sa aking tinig; nakikilala ko sila at sila ay sumusunod sa akin. Binibigyan ko sila ng walang hanggang buhay at sila ay hindi kailanman malilipol; walang aagaw sa kanila mula sa aking pangangalaga. Ang aking Ama na nagbigay sa kanila sa akin ay higit na dakila sa lahat, at walang kayang umagaw sa kanila mula sa pangangalaga ng Ama.” (Juan 10:27–29 Revised English Bible)*

Ayon kay Cristo, mayroon Siyang “sariling mga tupa”. Kung gayon, hindi lahat ng tao ay tupa ni Cristo o lingkod Niya, kahit na nagpapakilala silang Cristiano. Ang sabi pa ni Cristo: “Nakikilala Ko sila.” Samakatuwid, hindi lamang ang mahalaga ay kumikilala ang tao kay Cristo, kundi ang lalong mahalaga ay kinikilala siya ni Cristo.

Paano ipinakikilala ni Cristo ang sariling mga tupa Niya? Sila yaong nakikinig sa tinig ni Cristo at sumusunod sa Kaniyang mga utos.

Kaya, ang tunay na kay Cristo ay nakikinig at sumusunod sa Kaniya—sila ang bibigyan ng walang hanggang buhay o maliligtas.

"Ang aking sariling mga tupa ay nakikinig sa aking tinig; nakikilala ko sila at sila ay sumusunod sa akin."

Juan 10:27
Revised
English
Bible*

Ang kinaroroonan ng mga na kay Cristo

Pinatutunayan ni Cristo na may kinapapalooban ang mga taong tunay na Kaniya:

"Kaya muling nagsalita si Jesus: 'Buong katotohanang sinasabi ko sa inyo. Ako ang pintuan ng kulungan ng mga tupa. ... Ako ang pintuan; ang

sinumang taong pumasok sa loob ng kawan sa pamamagitan ko ay maliligtas.'" (Juan 10:7, 9 REB)*

Ang mga taong tunay na nakinig at sumunod kay Cristo ay ang "pumasok sa loob ng kawan". Ito ang "buong katotohanang" sinasabi ni Cristo sa mga taong ibig maligtas—dapat ay nasa loob sila ng kawan. Alin ang kawan na kinapapalooban ng mga taong kay Cristo?

"Ingatan ninyo kung gayon ang inyong sarili at ang buong kawan na rito'y hinirang kayo ng Espiritu Santo na mga katiwala, upang pakanin ang iglesia ni Cristo na binili niya ng kaniyang dugo." (Gawa 20:28 Lamsa Translation)*

Ang kawan ay ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Samakatuwid, ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ang kinaroroonan ng mga kay Cristo.

Gaano kahalaga na mapaloob ang tao sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*? Dito idinaragdag ng Diyos araw-araw ang mga taong maliligtas:

"Na pinupuri ang Diyos, at nagtataglay ng kagandahang-loob kasama ng buong bayan. At idinaragdag ng Panginoon sa iglesia araw-araw yaong mga dapat maligtas." (Gawa 2:47 Recovery Version)*

Kaya, napakahalaga na ang tao ay makinig at sumunod sa iniuutos ni Cristo—pumasok sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* upang mapabilang sa mga maliligtas sa Araw ng Paghuhukom.

Ang mga humiwalay at nahiwalay kay Cristo

Bagaman alam nila ang aral ni

Cristo na ang tao ay dapat nasa loob ng Iglesia upang maligtas, ang ilang natiwalag o naalis sa Iglesia ay nagmamatuwid na hindi na raw kailangan pa ang pag-anib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* para magtamo ng kaligtasan. Ipinakilala ni Apostol Pablo ang mga ganitong uri ng tao. Sinabi niya:

"Sila ay nagpapanggap na kilala [nila] ang Diyos [na kumikilala, may kaalaman, at may kabatiran sila sa Kaniya], subalit itinatangi at itinatatuwa at itinatakuwil] nila Siya sa pamamagitan ng kanilang ginagawa; sila ay kasuklam-suklam at nakamumuhi, walang pananam-palataya at masuwayin at hindi tapat at mapaghimagsik, at [sila ay] hindi akma at hindi karapat-dapat para sa anumang uri ng mabuting gawa (o gawain)." (Tito 1:16 Amplified Bible)*

Bakit sila nagkagayon? Ano ang kanilang naging layunin? Ganito naman ang itinuro ni Apostol Tadeo:

"Ang mga ito ang mga tao na naghahati sa inyo [nagdudulot ng pagkakabaha-bahagi], mga tao na ang kaisipan ay sa daigdig lamang na ito [makamundo; o namumuhay sa katutubong mga hilig/mga hangarin], na walang Espiritu [na naninirahan sa kanila at pumapatnubay sa kanila]." (Jud. 1:19 Expanded Bible)*

Ang kanilang layunin ay maghasik ng pagkakabaha-bahagi sa Iglesia. Hindi ang kalooban ng Diyos ang ibig nilang sundin kundi ang kanilang sariling gusto. Ginagawa nila ito

sapagkat sila ay wala nang patnubay ng Espiritu Santo. Sila ay hindi dapat paniwalaan dahil nagtuturo na sila ng kasinungalingan. Ayon kay Apostol Pablo:

“Ang ilang tao ay magtuturo ng mga bagay na kasinungalingan. Ang mga taong iyon ay hindi sasang-ayon sa tunay na aral ng ating Panginoong Jesucristo. At hindi nila tatanggapin ang pagtuturo na kasang-ayon ng tunay na paraan ng paglilingkod sa Diyos. Ang mga taong iyon ay mapagmalaki sa kanilang nalalaman, subalit wala silang nauunawaang anumang. Ang mga taong iyon ay may sakit na pagkahilig sa pakikipagtalo at pakikipag-away tungkol sa mga salita. At iyon ay nagdadala ng inggit, mga awayan, mga pang-iinsulto, at masamang paghihinala. At sila ay laging lumilikha ng kaguluhan, sapagkat sila ay mga tao na ang kaisipan ay nagulumihan. Nawalan na sila ng pagkaunawa sa katotohanan. Iniisip nila na ang paglilingkod sa Diyos ay isang paraan upang yumaman.” (I Tim. 6:3–5 Easy-to-Read Version)*

Kung gayon, hindi dapat pumayag ang sinuman na mada-daya ng ganitong uri ng mga tao. Hindi dapat paniwalaan ang mga nagsasabi na kahit na nasa labas ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay maliligtas din, sapagkat ang itinuturo nila ay aral na hindi lang taliwas kundi labag pa sa mga aral ng Diyos na itinuro ni Cristo at ng mga apostol.

Ang kasamaan kung hiwalay kay Cristo

Ano ang kasamaan kapag ang tao

ay wala sa loob ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo* o hiwalay kay Cristo? Ganito ang pagtuturo ni Apostol Pablo:

“Alalahanin [ninyo] na nang panahong iyon kayo ay hiwalay kay Cristo [hindi kabilang sa alinmang may pagkakaugnay sa Kaniya], malayo sa bayang Israel, at mga dayuhan sa mga tipan [na walang bahagi sa banal na pangako ng Mesias at walang kaalaman sa mga kasunduan ng Diyos], na walang pag-asa [sa Kaniyang pangako] at [namumuhay] sa daigdig nang walang Diyos.” (Efe. 2:12 Amplified Bible 2015)*

Ang mga taong wala sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay “namumuhay sa daigdig nang walang Diyos”—hindi kinikilala ng Diyos. Wala rin silang “bahagi sa banal na pangako ng Mesias” o hindi maliligtas. Ito ay sapagkat hindi sila nakaugnay kay Cristo.

Kaya, napakahalaga na mapabilang ang tao sa may kaugnayan kay Cristo, ang Kaniyang Iglesia.

Paano inilarawan ni Apostol Pablo ang kaugnayan ni Cristo sa Kaniyang Iglesia?

“Sa kadahilanang ito iiwan ng lalake ang kaniyang ama at kaniyang ina at makikisama [at tapat na magtatalaga] sa kaniyang asawang babae, at ang dalawa ay magiging isang laman. Ang hiwagang ito [ng pagiging isa ng dalawa] ay dakila; subalit ang sinasalita ko ay ang tungkol sa [kaugnayan ni] Cristo at ng Iglesia.” (Efe. 5:31–32 AMP2015)*

Ang kaugnayan ni Cristo sa Kaniyang Iglesia ay katulad ng kaugnayan ng mag-asawa. Si Cristo ang espaso ng Kaniyang

Iglesia. Kaya, kung paanong masama na maghiwalay ang mag-asawa, masama rin na ang tao ay hiwalay kay Cristo o sa Kaniyang Iglesia, ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo*.

Samakatuwid, kapag na-hiwalay ang tao sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay mawawala rin ang kaugnayan niya kay Cristo. Ang hiwalay ay wala nang pag-asa sa pangakong kaligtasan (Efe. 2:12) at doon na kabilang sa mga hahatulan ng Diyos. Ganito ang patotoo ni Apostol Pablo:

“Hindi ko karapatan na hatulan yaong mga hindi kabahagi ng iglesia. Ang Diyos ang hahatol sa kanila. Subalit dapat ninyong hatulan ang mga tao na kabahagi ng Iglesia. Sinasabi ng Kasulatan, Dapat ninyong alisin ang masasamang tao sa gitna ninyo.” (I Cor. 5:12–13 New Century Version)*

Maliwanag na hahatulan ng Diyos ang “mga hindi kabahagi ng iglesia.” Ang hatol na tinutukoy ay ang kakila-kilabot na kamatayan, ang walang hanggang kaparusahan sa dagat-dagatang apoy sa Araw ng Paghuhukom (Apoc. 20:14).

Kaya, kailangang tiyakin ng tao na siya ay tunay na kay Cristo o nasa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* upang makatiyak ng kaligtasan pagdating ng Araw ng Paghuhukom. ☞

Batay sa leksyong itinuro ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan, ang Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo, sa pagsamba sa Tagaytay, Cavite noong Enero 20, 2018

*Isinalin mula sa Ingles

Global Divorce Rates

Global divorce rates continue to rise. Unified Lawyers, a law firm in Australia, published the below infographic that sheds light on the reality of divorce across the globe. The divorce rate infographic showcases divorce rates in countries around the world.

Fewer marriages and more divorces

It's not just the UK who have seen a decrease in the number of couples getting married, the research shows that this trend is global. Many couples now are opting to co-habit [sic] rather than get married, we wonder whether this is caused by the fundamental shift in the way relationships are seen.

Countries with the highest divorce rate

According to Unified Lawyers research; Luxembourg, Spain, and France have the highest divorce rates globally. India, Chile, and Colombia have the lowest rate of divorce, the UK sits in seventh place for divorce rates globally with 42% of couples getting a divorce.

Countries with the longest marriage

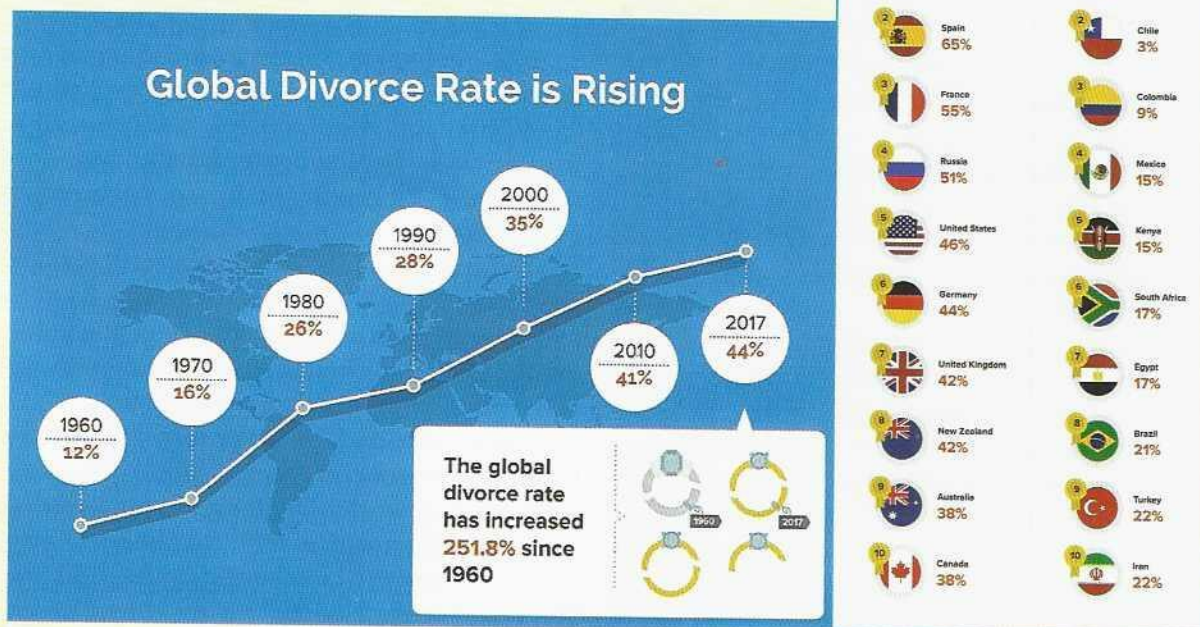
Italy, Canada, and France have the longest marriages. With Italian couples remaining married for 18 years on average. The average length of a marriage in the UK is eleven years. This has decreased over time, we believe it's ultimately

down to the fact that we are living longer than past generations.

Reasons for divorce globally

The number one reason that most couples get divorced is due to growing apart and out of love. This is also linked to the above, in that we are living much longer. Unfortunately for couples in England and Wales though, if you divorce for this reason you have to enter into a blame game as no-fault divorce does not yet exist in the English and Welsh legal system.

source: uk.amicable.io



[Excerpted from <https://uk.amicable.io/infographic-global-divorce-rates/>]

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

Rahab welcomes the spies sent by Joshua

She knew the risk of hiding the Israelite spies. But because she made the right choice and believed in the Lord God of Israel, she and her family were saved.

After wandering for 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites began their conquest of the Promised Land, Canaan, through the leadership of Joshua, the successor of Moses. The first major city the Israelites set out to conquer was Jericho.

JOSHUA CHOSE TWO MEN AS SPIES and sent them from their camp at Acacia with these instructions: "Go across the river and find out as much as you can about the whole region, especially about the town of Jericho."

The two spies left the Israelite camp at Acacia and went to Jericho, where they decided to spend the night at the house of a prostitute named Rahab.

But someone found out about them and told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelite men came here tonight, and they are spies." So the king sent soldiers to Rahab's house to arrest the spies.

Meanwhile, Rahab had taken the men up to the flat roof of her house and had hidden them under some piles of flax plants that she had put there to dry.

The soldiers came to her door and demanded, "Let us have the men who are staying at your house. They are spies."

She answered, "Some men did come to my house, but I didn't know where they had come from. They left about sunset, just before it was time to close the town gate. I don't know where they were going, but if you hurry, maybe you can catch them."

The guards at the town gate let the soldiers leave Jericho, but they closed the gate again as soon as the soldiers went through. Then the soldiers headed toward the Jordan River to look for the spies at the place where people cross the river.

Rahab went back up to her roof. The spies were still awake, so she told them:

I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. Everyone shakes with fear because of you. We heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea so you could leave Egypt. And we heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings

east of the Jordan River. We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our courage and our will to fight.

Please promise me in the LORD's name that you will be as kind to my family as I have been to you. Do something to show that you won't let your people kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and their families.

"Rahab," the spies answered, "if you keep quiet about what we're doing, we promise to be kind to you when the LORD gives us this land. We pray that the LORD will kill us if we don't keep our promise!"

Rahab's house was built into the town wall, and one of the windows in her house faced outside the wall. She gave the spies a rope, showed them the window, and said, "Use this rope to let yourselves down to the ground outside the wall. Then hide in the hills. The men who are looking for you won't be able to find you there. They'll give up and come back after a few days, and you can be on your way."

The spies said:

You made us promise to let you and your family live. We will keep our promise, but you can't tell anyone why we were here. You must tie this red rope on your window when we attack, and your father and mother, your brothers, and everyone else in your family must be here with you. We'll take the blame if anyone who stays in this house gets hurt. But anyone who leaves your house will be killed, and it won't be our fault.

"I'll do exactly what you said," Rahab promised. Then she sent them on their way and tied the red rope to the window. ●

(Quoted from Joshua 2:1-21
Contemporary English Version)

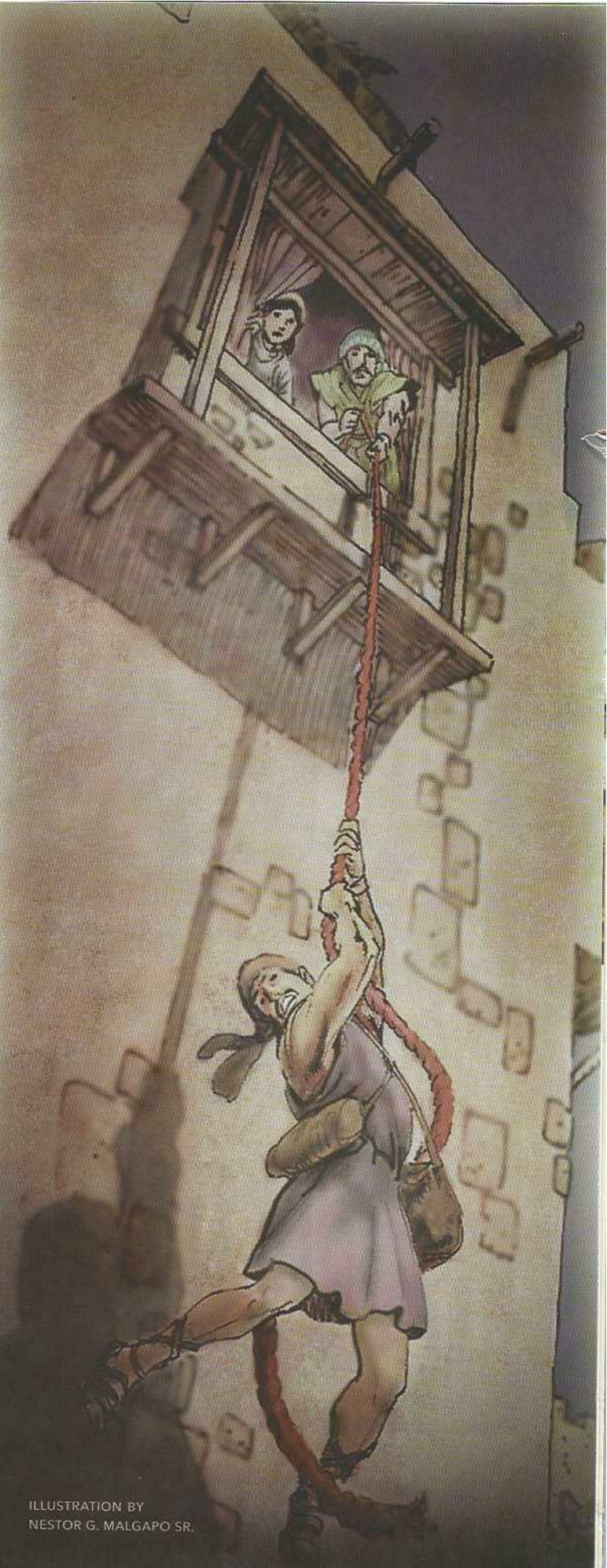


ILLUSTRATION BY
NESTOR G. MALGAPO SR.

Features

Fairview house of worship dedicated

By ERIC JUN G. RAMIREZ
and PAUL MATTHEW C. CASCANTE



FAIRVIEW, QUEZON CITY: The newly dedicated house of worship

STRATEGICALLY LOCATED near the junction of Commonwealth Avenue and Regalado Avenue in Quezon City, Philippines, the newly constructed 1,797-seater house of worship of the Local Congregation of Fairview was dedicated to God on September 8, 2018.

The dedication was officiated by Brother Bienvenido C. Santiago, General Evangelist of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ). It was attended by thousands of brethren from the Local Congregation of Fairview and from the neighboring local congregations.

"It is a manifestation of God's blessings. Despite the poverty besetting the world, we see another magnificent chapel of the Church rise," expressed Brother Jeavon Caster Zoleta, the local congregation's resident minister.

The occasion was indeed historic for the entire Church as it was held just a day after the 9th anniversary of Brother Eduardo V. Manalo as the Executive Minister of the Church, yet another testament to God's abiding love to His people in these last days.

During the construction of their house of worship, brethren in the Local Congregation of Fairview pitched in to help until its completion. "Every weekend, together with fellow *KADIWA* members and other brethren, we came to the construction site and helped in whatever task we could. We got tired, but we know that our labors are not in vain because it is for the house of God. Seeing now how magnificent the chapel is makes me proud," expressed Sister Pamela Dizon, the *KADIWA* president of the local congregation.

"I am not from the Local Congregation of Fairview, but seeing the progress of the construction of the house of worship when I passed by it, I felt joy and excitement because I know that it is a manifestation of God's help to the Church," said Brother Francisco Hertiz III, a finance officer from the Local Congregation of Novaliches.

"I will guide and teach my children not to forsake our worship services to our Lord



God," added Sister Virginia May Guzman, secretary of the Local Congregation of Fairview.

This new house of worship is the fourth house of worship of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* along Commonwealth Avenue. The other three are the houses of worship of the local congregations of Templo Central, Commonwealth, and Capitol.

"We are joyful that our hopes have been realized at last. With our brand-new house of worship, we can accommodate

a greater number of worshipers each time we gather. And being in a strategic location, it is accessible to brethren from other local congregations when circumstances compel them to attend worship services here with us. Truly, God is good to us, and to the Church Of Christ in its entirety," enthused Brother Danilo Rey Roncal Sr., the head deacon of the local congregation.

"The brethren here in the Local Congregation of Fairview and the entire Ecclesiastical

District of Quezon City consider the dedication of this new house of worship as inspiring as it is historic. We thank and praise God for His love to the Church," expressed Brother Bever O. Bauto, the district supervising minister of Quezon City. Indeed, praise and honor be to God, for it is by His grace and guidance through the Church Administration that the brethren are provided with suitable places of worship where they can fulfill their duty of worshipping Him. ●

Converts



BROTHER

Andrew
Wynne

North Carolina, USA



**The exact fulfillment
of the prophecies
in both the time
and place concerning
the ends of the earth,
the Far East,
and the islands
of the sea described
in the Bible
convinced me that
I had to become
a member.**



WAS BORN in Evanston, Cook County, Illinois, USA on April 16, 1957. I grew up as an Episcopalian. Between 1972 and 1974, I was a lay reader in the Episcopalian church. After graduating from Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, I soon joined the United States Marines.

In 1985, as an active duty United States Marine stationed in Japan, but temporarily assigned to the Philippines, I met my future wife, who explained that she was a member of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. When I explained to her that I wanted to use the Bible to compare our religions, she just smiled. I asked her about the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* and she introduced me to one of her older brothers, Brother Ampan, who accompanied me to worship services and Bible studies.

I was amazed that the minister taught what exactly was in the Bible and how orderly and inspirational the worship services were. The exact fulfillment of the prophecies in both the time and place concerning the ends of the earth, the Far East, and the islands of the sea described in the Bible convinced me that I had to become a member.

However, upon returning to Japan from the Philippines, I could not find the meeting place of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Next, when I was in Virginia, USA, I went looking for

the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* house of worship. However, the building with the label Church of Christ was not part of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* that I had attended in the Philippines. It was a different religion and their worship services were not in order, the hymns were not inspirational, and the sermons were not solidified throughout by verses of the Bible. Finally, I called the Philippine embassy in Washington, D.C. and I found out about a house of worship of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* in Temple Hills, Maryland. Although living in Virginia, I went there and attended the Bible study lessons. I was baptized in the *Iglesia ni Cristo* in June of 1986 in the Temple Hills house of worship.

I cordially invite everyone to attend the worship services and Bible studies of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. After each worship service and Bible study lesson, feel free to ask the minister or ministerial worker any questions that you have concerning the teachings of God upheld in the Church Of Christ. ☉

Brother Andrew Wynne is a Children's Worship Service teacher, SCAN president, Light of Salvation vice president, local chronicler, and Buklod officer in the High Point Congregation, North Carolina. His son, Brother AJ Wynne, is a ministerial worker of the Church Of Christ.

Your love is inspiring

Inspiring is Your love for us, dear Father,
Through the man You've placed as our leader.
He tirelessly labors for our welfare
And brings us, Your servants, to You even closer.

He has his share in the sufferings
That on us this harsh world brings.
Hence, he understands our feelings;
He sympathizes with us deep within.

Untiring is our Administrator—
A clear proof that You are his anchor.
Toiling and sacrificing, increasing in fervor
In giving his best to bring You honor.

Compassion is always felt in his admonitions;
Sincere love flows from his exhortations.
He calls on us to fight for our election—
To stay up and awake for our salvation.

Dearest Father, we promise You—
Throughout our lives we'll remain true.
Our beloved leader, we shall obey and follow, too,
And thus reach the holy abode promised by You.

Listen, please, to our earnest prayer:
Always take good care of our dear brother;
Let the Church remain under his loving care;
And upon us, Your love and blessings always shower.

Your glorious victories will continue cascading
As the promised salvation continues approaching.
The Church Of Christ will be forever praising
You, dear Father—because Your love is truly inspiring.

BRANDO BERNARD C. BUCKS
BULACAN, PHILIPPINES

**Don't
Extinguish
the *Fire* of the
Holy Spirit
that Works in Us**



1 THESSALONIANS 5:19, PLAIN ENGLISH TRANSLATION